



THE NOURISHMENT
OF
THE CHRISTIAN SOUL.



'IS IT NOTHING TO YOU, ALL YE THAT PASS BY? BEHOLD AND SEE IF THERE BE ANY SORROW LIKE UNTO MY SORROW WHICH IS DONE UNTO ME WHEREWITH THE LORD HATH AFFLICTED ME IN THE DAY OF HIS FIERCE ANGER.'

LAM: 1. 12

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La nourriture de l'âme chrétienne]

THE NOURISHMENT

OF

THE CHRISTIAN SOUL:

OR

MENTAL PRAYER RENDERED EASY BY MEDITATION ON
THE PASSION OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST.

With Exercises and Prayers.

abbé Desiré

FROM THE FRENCH OF PINART.

*Edited by A. P. F. J. Alex.
Penrose Forbes, M.A. of Brechin*

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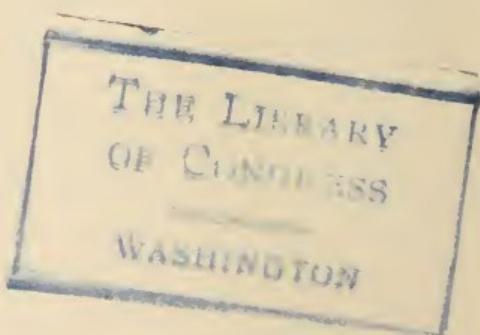
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TO
THE MEMORY OF
ONE,
WHO, CUT DOWN LIKE A FLOWER,
FOUND,
DURING A LONG AND PAINFUL ILLNESS,
MUCH COMFORT
IN THE FORMER TRANSLATION
OF THIS AUTHOR'S WORK,
THIS
IS DEDICATED.

PRETIOSA IN CONSPECTU DOMINI
MORS SANCTORUM EJUS.

EDITOR'S PREFACE

TO THE FIRST EDITION.

THE Editor has been encouraged to publish a sequel to his former work, from the knowledge conveyed to him, that that had been found of great use and comfort at more than one blessed deathbed. He believes also that it has been profitable to many still in their warfare.

In adapting the present work he has, to a certain degree, followed the same rules which influenced him formerly. His object has been to make it generally useful for English minds. One remark is necessary. In the details of our LORD's life, he has suffered to remain some things, which a reverent imagination would naturally conclude to have certainly taken place; while he has excluded what is merely legendary, such as the history of our LORD first appearing to His Mother after the Resurrection, and the story of the Veronica, he has not hesitated to leave such descriptions of the actual facts as clothe them with reality to our dull minds. The manner of the Sacred Narrative is very like the manner of the early Byzantine Pictures, with their calm, stern, true delineations, and

their golden backgrounds. There is nothing to heighten the interest beyond the mere facts. Nothing but the reality is there. Aught else would derogate from the majesty of the Divine Gospel. Thus it is, and thus it ought to be. But in aid of our frail natures, there is no harm in allowing the imagination reverently to rest on the details of each action ; and to form, as it were, a picture of them. All that the Editor has allowed himself is, to leave some background to the scene, in order that we, at the distance of eighteen centuries, should be able to assist thereat in spirit.

The practical advices are chiefly for those who from circumstances, living in the world, are desirous of leading holy lives and aspiring at perfection. They will thus be found to combine much that is very high in devotion, with an adaption to the circumstances of every-day life ; and their main object is to enable us to do our duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call us.

The Editor would again express his grateful thanks to the translator, and his hopes that this little work may, by God's blessing, be instrumental in the edification of many souls, for whom He died.

A. P. F.

Brechin, Lent, 1852.

P R E F A C E.

ALL the masters of the spiritual life are agreed in saying, that one of the most efficacious means of perfection is mental prayer. They look upon it as being the nourishment of the soul, and exhort all Christians to make it in some measure their daily bread.

Unhappily a great number of pious persons, under the plea that they are unable to meditate, and that they have never succeeded in following the rules for prayer pointed out to them, abstain from this very useful exercise, and thus deprive themselves of the precious graces they might derive therefrom. It is, then, with the view of aiding their insufficiency and their good desires, that I offer them this new work. It contains certain meditations, so arranged, that they have but to read with attention the exposition of the truths which form the subject of each, to find therein the indication of those acts of faith, love, confidence, contrition, and good purpose, which meditation thereupon ought to produce. The colloquies which accompany each subject of the meditations offer to them examples of these several acts, and they have only to follow step by step the guidance which leads them on.

Happy the soul which shall be sufficiently faithful to yield herself thus to be directed in the paths of prayer : and which, overcoming the disgust with which the devil will never fail to inspire her for this holy exercise, shall devote herself thereto with courage and constancy to the end of her days ! She will soon acquire much facility therein, and will assuredly make rapid progress in the exercise of every Christian virtue.

This work may be considered as a sequel to, or completion of, *Les Flammes de l'Amour de Jésus*.¹ In that book I sought to show forth the immense love which our Divine SAVIOUR manifested towards us in the work of our Redemption, and the obligation we are under to render love for love. In the *Nourishment of the Christian Soul*, I have proposed to myself another end : I there look upon the LORD JESUS as our pattern in all conditions of life, and set Him forth for our imitation. I there draw a perpetual comparison between His way of acting and our own, and I place His virtues beside our vices and imperfections ; I contrast His humility with our pride, His unalterable sweetness with our angry tempers, His poverty with our love of riches, &c., and thence I take occasion to show how far off we still are from resembling our Divine Master, and with what ardour we should apply ourselves to imitate the wonderful example He bequeathed to us.

It is not simply a collection of pious readings which you must look for here ; it is essentially a book of

¹ "Meditations on the Suffering Life on earth of our LORD and only SAVIOUR."

meditations, whereupon, in order to gather therefrom good fruit, it is needful to ponder well ; it is a book to be meditated upon in tranquillity of soul, and in the presence of GOD, at the foot of His Cross. If it is merely read hurriedly, lightly, or from curiosity, there is danger of deriving very little profit therefrom.

Each meditation is followed by one or more *Resolutions*. As these resolutions are for the most part lengthy, and contain practical instructions, pious souls may use them as spiritual reading, having care to weigh well the lessons they afford, and above all striving to carry them out in their conduct.

The Holy Scriptures, the Fathers, the best ascetic books of the middle age and of our own days, are the chief sources from whence I have drawn a great number of the thoughts which will be found in this work. I have likewise borrowed many excellent sentiments and colloquies from a little Italian work composed a hundred and fifty years ago ; it is equally to that work that I am indebted for the conception of that plan I have adopted for the meditations. I might have multiplied the quotations from the Scriptures and holy Fathers ; but it would have been to swell this volume needlessly, and cause its price to be higher : this consideration checked me.

The meditations which compose *The Nourishment of the Christian Soul* dwell only upon the Passion of our LORD. Albeit the subject is not new, I have preferred it to every other, because, according to the testimony of the masters of the spiritual life, meditation on the Passion is the most profitable of all.

I entreat the reader to close his eyes to the imper-

fections he will meet with in my work, and to regard only the desire I have had to be of use to him. Let him not be surprised to find me frequently recurring to the exercise of certain virtues, such as humility, meekness, mortification, penitence ; and this I do designedly. As we are but too much inclined to forget the practice of these virtues, it is of use that we be often warned of the necessity for a Christian to apply himself unremittingly to these. And this I have done.

I conclude by commanding myself earnestly to the prayers of all persons who may use this book. I, on my part, will commend them likewise to GOD. This interchange of intercession will be acceptable to the LORD, and will help us all to arrive at the abode of everlasting happiness.

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THE
NOURISHMENT
OF
THE CHRISTIAN SOUL.

MEDITATION I.

JUDAS BETRAYS OUR LORD, AND SELLS HIM TO THE
CHIEF PRIESTS FOR THIRTY PIECES OF SILVER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

JUDAS, one of the twelve Apostles, had long conceived in his heart the horrible design of betraying his Divine Master. Judging the time to be favourable, he secretly sought the chief priests and elders of the people, who were the bitterest enemies of JESUS, and, by a dreadful sacrilege, he sold Him to them for the vile price of thirty pieces of silver, as though JESUS were a fettered slave, that being in those days, among the Jews, the price of a slave.

1. Reflect upon the greatness of Him Who was thus sold. Remember that it was JESUS CHRIST, the only SON of the Eternal FATHER, the Sovereign LORD of all things, and be astonished that the King of heaven and earth consented, for love of thee, to humble Himself, even to the degree of being looked upon and treated

as a slave ; whilst thou, dust and ashes, wilt not even accept, for love of Him, a slight humiliation, nor perform, when occasion offers, an act of humility ! Yea, be amazed when thou seest that thy GOD, greatness itself, suffers Himself to be thrust into the lowest condition without complaining or taking vengeance ; whilst thou, mean worm, art clamorous because the highest place is not always yielded to thee. Oh, then, blush, and acknowledge that there is in thee an unparalleled pride, and beseech the LORD to break it, and to make thee truly humble.

2. Consider well the incomparable patience which JESUS manifested in bearing with and concealing the treachery of His disciple, notwithstanding the horror wherewith it inspired Him. He spurns him not, He speaks not harshly to him, He proclaims not his perfidy to others, He takes not from him his title of Apostle, but continues to treat him with an all-divine kindness, in order to make him return into himself, to win back his heart, and to convert him.¹ Oh, how great the difference between thy Divine Master's actions and thine ! Behold, indeed, thine own habitual impatience under all which thwarts, how little soever, thy will or inclination. Rarely dost thou endure with calmness the faults and imperfections of thy brethren ; thou art frequently so easily provoked, that the least offence, the slightest want of consideration or of gratitude, a single sharp word, suffices to wound and to irritate thee,

¹ Laudo et honorifico te, ô Jesu, pro tuâ mitissimâ sufferentiâ perfidi discipuli : quòd adversùs eum non es commotus, neque duriùs locutus, sed neque aliis ejus nequitiam statim indicasti. (Thom. à Kempis, De Vita Christi Meditationes, Pars ii. cap. 1.)

and even at times it may be to inspire thee with burning desires of revenge.¹ Blush, therefore, that thou still so little resemblest thy divine Pattern; make a firm resolution to be for the future more calm under contradictions, more patient, and less easily provoked. And when thou hast cause to complain of thy neighbour's conduct towards thee, entertain not any wrath against him ; but cover his fault with the cloak of charity, forgive him freely, and do him good, if only by praying for him.

Colloquy.—O GOD of patience, Thou whose mercy is infinite in bearing with the wrongs and ingratitude committed against Thee by men, grant me endurance to suffer patiently the offences of my fellow-creatures myself! Give me the strength to repress my wrath, and that I yield not to resentment on those occasions when I have to bear contradictions and grief. I desire, O good JESU, to imitate Thy meekness and long-suffering ; help and succour me that I may succeed therein for Thy glory and my own salvation. By means of Thy grace, which I ask of Thee and hope for, I will henceforth accept with submission all the humiliations which may come upon me, and remain calm and tranquil amidst the continual contrarieties of this life, and bear with gentleness the faults and ill-treatment of my brethren, and restrain my impetuosity and gusts of passion. To Thee alone, O JESUS, be the glory. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Who is he who sold JESUS CHRIST ? He was one

¹ *Heu mihi quòd tam parùm possum de fratre meo tolerare, si quid contra me dixerit, vel fecerit.* (Thom. à Kempis, ibid.)

of His beloved disciples, an Apostle whom He had laden with kindnesses, honoured with His confidence, enriched with great and precious prerogatives, to whom He had even granted the gift of performing miracles : and yet, notwithstanding so many favours, this Apostle fell deeply, and came to a lamentable end.

1. Learn from this fall of Judas the very great need thou hast of the help of God, of the gift of perseverance, thou who hast by no means received his amount of favours and privileges. That unhappy Apostle had begun well, but he persevered not in the good path, though he was in a state so holy, in companionship so edifying, and in the school of so perfect a Master.¹ Art thou happier or more faithful than he was ? alas ! thou canst not hope to be so unless God help thee.

2. Bewail, then, the little depth there is in thee, when it is in question to apply thyself to what is good, and ask of God in humility grace to persevere till death in His love, and in the constant practice of all thy duties. Never forget that thou art more fragile than glass, that thou hast everything to fear from thy inclination to evil, and that if God sustain thee not, thou too wilt one day betray Him. Endeavour to realise the whole extent of thy weakness, and tremble ; yea, tremble, watch, and pray, if thou wilt remain faithful to

¹ Sine perseverantiâ nulla actio vel opus remunerabile est ; sine illâ omnis perfectio in nihilum redigitur. Quid enim profuit apostolo et traditori Judæ quod ipsum Dominus de mundo elegerat ? Quid profuit diuturnitas familiaritatis Jesu Christi ? Quid sancta prædicatio quam sœpè ab illo audierat ? Quid exempla virtutis et miracula quæ ab illo viderat ? Quid societas apostolorum ? Quid gratia ei collata ad prædicandum, et ad miracula faciendum ? (Alberti Magni Paradisus Animæ, cap. 42.)

thy Divine Master. Although thou standest now, take heed lest thou fall;¹ and with tears beseech the LORD to hold thee ever by the hand, lest thou fall as hopelessly as Judas.

Colloquy.—O my JESUS, at Thy feet I confess my inconstancy, and beseech Thee to grant me holy perseverance in good things and in works of piety. This perseverance is a gift which I can receive only from Thy bountiful hand; therefore it is of Thee, O my GOD, that I ask it in the name of Thy mercy and goodness. I tremble when I think of my weakness, and of the unhappy facility wherewith I incline to evil; and for this reason I turn myself to Thine Almightiness, that it may shed into my heart a constant hatred for sin, an unchangeable love for Thee who art Sovereign good, and a continued obedience to Thy holy law. O my GOD, reject not my prayer. Since I have been in the world, Thou hast never been a single moment without doing me good. I desire in gratitude to be never more a single moment without loving Thee. Yes, I love Thee, I love Thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, and I ask grace of Thee to love Thee ever more and more, until I have the happiness of beholding and loving Thee eternally in Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Observe how great was the avarice of Judas, and to what a pass he was blinded by the covetous love of money. He sought the chief priests, and without naming any fixed sum, lest they should refuse his proposal, he contented himself with offering to them His Master, saying, “What will ye give me, and I will deliver Him

¹ Qui stat, videat ne cadat. (1 Cor. x. 12.)

unto you?"¹ By these words he gave them to understand that he relied upon them for the wages of his treachery, and that he would accept with eagerness what little they should offer him ; and at the same time he gave proof that he valued a paltry sum of money far above JESUS CHRIST his Divine Master.

1. Learn from this example how great a calamity it is when man allows an inordinate passion to arise within his soul, whatever it may be ; for the passion gradually taking possession of the heart which nurtures it, blinds, masters, and enslaves it ; and to such a degree, that without the special help of Heaven it can free itself no more ; therefore nothing is more important than that at the very beginning it should oppose a vigorous resistance to every evil passion, in order that it enter not into our soul, that it establish not its kingdom therein, and that it plunge us not into an abyss of woe.

2. Turn thy reflections towards thyself, and acknowledge that thou, after having received from the LORD so many wonderful benefits, from the first moment of thy existence to this day, hast nevertheless, through sin, basely sold thy soul to the devil, its most cruel enemy.² What do I say ? Thou hast sold JESUS CHRIST Himself, and that for a less price than did Judas : for thou hast betrayed Him for a miserable gratification, for a contemptible enjoyment ; yes, thou hast been vile enough to prefer before JESUS CHRIST thy SAVIOUR

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 15.

² Qui peccat, animam suam vendit diabolo, accepta, tanquam pretio, dulcedine temporalis voluptatis. (S. Aug. in Exposit. Epist. ad Rom.)

the caprice of a moment, an accursed fancy, an unbridled desire. Woe unto thee, that thou hast been guilty to such a pass ! Be sorry, then, unhappy soul ; detest thy past iniquities, loathe thine ingratitude towards so good a Master, and beseech Him, in the fulness of thy heart, to vouchsafe to forgive thee. Say to Him with the Prophet, “ Have mercy on me, O LORD, according to the greatness of Thy mercies ! blot out all the stains of my soul, and forget all my sins ; for I hate them, and had rather die than commit them any more.”

Colloquy.—My SAVIOUR, I have sinned against Heaven and against Thee ; I have sold my soul to the devil so often as I have grievously offended Thee ; I have suffered myself to be overcome by unworthy passions and they have drawn me into sin. O LORD, I now abhor these vile passions, and I detest the sins they have caused me to commit. Forgive, O my GOD, forgive ! I truly mourn for having so grievously offended Thee : I firmly resolve rather to die than any more to commit a single mortal sin. And since Thou knowest how great is my weakness, come to my help, subdue the strength of my passions, and bridle them by the efficacy of Thy grace. I would indeed not ruin myself for eternity ; but the violence of my evil inclinations makes me fear this calamity ; break them, O Almighty GOD, by the merits of Thy death, and grant me sufficient strength to mortify and overcome them always. Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Be willing, for the love of GOD, to be put into, or to abide in, the lowest place, and thy reward shall be

great: for he that exalteth himself shall be abased, while, on the contrary, he that humbleth himself here shall one day be exalted and glorified in heaven.

2. Endure patiently and uncomplainingly the evil proceedings of others, and seek to render them good for evil: it is the only revenge which is permitted to a Christian.

3. Labour to correct the excessive susceptibility of thy character; because this susceptibility is displeasing to GOD, injures thyself in the estimation of thy neighbours, and serves to render thee miserable.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Think often fearfully of the fall of Judas, and tremble lest thou fall like him.

2. Beware of thy inclination to what is evil: and if thou wilt not become its prey, flee carefully from every dangerous occasion. He who exposes himself to danger unnecessarily, will infallibly perish therein: this is a truth which experience daily confirms.

3. As final perseverance is a gift from heaven of pure gratuity, and as GOD is wont to give it only to those who ask, therefore ask for it every day with confidence, in order each day to obtain it.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Suffer no passion, however weak and harmless it may appear to thee, to take root in thy heart. Without this precaution, thine eternal ruin is almost certain: Judas began by loving money rather too much. The passion of avarice was only in its bud; but instead of repressing it immediately, he fomented, nou-

rished, caressed it, and it ended by drawing him into the greatest of woes : he became first a thief, then a traitor, and lastly a reprobate.

2. Beseech the LORD to grant thee pardon for all the ingratitude wherewith thou hast repaid His benefits.

3. Never permit thyself in the least little sin that is voluntary : indifference to little sins, thou knowest, leads by degrees to very serious falls.

MEDITATION III.¹

JESUS EATS HIS LAST SUPPER WITH HIS APOSTLES.

FIRST SUBJECT.

HIS Passion approaching, the LORD JESUS sent forth from the market-town of Bethany, where He was abiding two of His disciples to Jerusalem, there to seek and prepare a lodging, where He might eat His last Supper with His Apostles, because He had no home of His own, nor any provision for the celebration of the Passover.

1. A wonderful thing indeed was that exceeding poverty unto which GOD Incarnate willed to submit Himself during His mortal life ; and assuredly that voluntary poverty, voluntarily accepted, was a rich treasure in His eyes, when that Divine Master, Who is Incarnate Wisdom, esteemed and loved it so much as to prefer it to all the riches of Paradise ! He was born poor, He lived poor, He died so poor, that all the riches He possessed were a cross, a few nails, and a

¹ Meditation II. is suppressed because founded on an uncertain though beautiful legend.

crown of thorns! He was GOD; He possessed in Heaven all the treasures of glory, and behold He willed to be in need of everything on earth, even the possession of a miserable cottage, in which to receive His friends and His servants! And thou, who art only a frail creature, who hast perchance committed great sins, for which thou shouldest live a life of penitence, wouldest be rich! thou sighest but for the good things and enjoyments of fortune; thou aspirest to all imaginable comforts in thy dwelling, in thy furniture, in everything appertaining to thy mode of life; and if, by chance, something is missing, thou murmurest and weariest others with thy continual complaints. Is it thus, I ask thee, that thou shovest thyself the disciple and imitator of a GOD of poverty, Who was destitute of all things? Arouse thy faith, therefore; know that poverty patiently endured is a rich inheritance, which will open to thee the gates of Paradise! know that a rich man is very poor if he serves not GOD, and that a poor man is infinitely rich if he possesses His love. Wherefore, ask of the LORD to quench within thee the love of riches, and to give thee a love of poverty, with the privations it imposes.

2. Wherefore was it the will of JESUS CHRIST to possess nothing in this world? It was to teach us to centre all the affections of our heart in the treasures of heaven; it was to teach us that the things of earth last but a short time, and pass away quickly, whilst those of the other life are eternal, and will never pass away; it was to have a right to say to us, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through

and steal ; but lay up for yourselves treasures in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.”¹

3. Behold how firmly thou still cleavest in heart and affection to the frail and perishing possessions of this place of exile, and pray to the LORD that He will graciously detach thee from them, and give thee grace to make henceforth no other use of them than so far as they may help thee to attain thy ultimate goal, which is GOD. And what are indeed these possessions ? Wherefore are they to be pursued with so much passion ? Why seek in them that repose which they cannot give thee ? At best they may amuse thee for a moment, but can never satisfy thee. Thy heart is too vast ; there is nought but GOD which can fill and satisfy it. Cling, therefore, to GOD alone with thy whole being.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Master of perfect poverty, detach my heart from the love of earthly riches ! Enable me to learn to despise them, as being unworthy of, and dangerous for my soul. That which I desire, O my God, is, that I may henceforth place all my affections in the immortal blessings, which alone can fill my heart and render me happy. Increase within my soul more and more this desire for eternal blessedness. Grant to me to make a good use of riches, that I may never use them to offend Thee, but employ them gladly in alms shed into the lap of the poor, and in other good works. Help me to deprive myself from time to time, for love of Thee, of certain things which give me pleasure, but wherewith, in truth, I can dispense. Give

¹ S. Matt. vi. 19, 20.

me, likewise, O my God, an occasional inability to procure things which would be useful to me, in order that I may thus realize some of the consequences of that poverty which Thou didst love so much on earth, and to which Thou submittedst during each day of Thy mortal life. Enough for me to acquire the riches of heaven: and provided I may attain one day to the possession of those, I am ready to suffer all the privations it may please Thee to send me here on earth. Enough for me to love Thee with my whole heart; because then, however destitute I may be of this world's goods, I shall be infinitely rich. Give me, then, Thy love, O my God, and I shall have nothing more to desire here below, unless it be to love Thee more and more for ever in this world and in the next. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Consider the love which our Divine SAVIOUR again manifested in this meeting. Although He well knew that Judas had sold Him to the chief priests for a paltry sum of money, and was watching in secret for an opportunity of betraying Him: yet He drove him not from His presence, but admitted him to the same table with the others, and gave him to eat from His own dish with great kindness and sweetness, as much as if that wretched man had committed no evil, and his soul had remained pure from every crime.

1. In beholding that infinite goodness of JESUS CHRIST, do thou withdraw into thyself and meditate upon the hardness of thy heart, which, for the slightest injury received from any one, becomes filled with bitterness and anger, and even forms the resolution never to

forgive. Acknowledge how little of virtue thou hast, since, when it is a question of seeing him who has offended thee, and of speaking to him as usual with gentleness and charity, thou knowest not either how to conquer thyself, or to do the slightest violence to the evil inclination of thy soul, and perseverest, notwithstanding the remorse of thy conscience, in thy anger and bitterness.

2. For what motive, I ask thee, hatest thou thus thy brother ? Has he done thee all the evil that Judas did to JESUS ? Has he wronged thee, as that perfidious Apostle wronged his Divine Master ? And yet thou seest that JESUS CHRIST revenged not Himself, and cast not the traitor from Him ; hast thou the right to act otherwise than thy SAVIOUR acted ? Once more, wherefore hatest thou thy brother ? is he not man like thee ? is he not a child of GOD, like thee ? is he not a Christian like thee ? is he not a member of CHRIST like thee ? is he not bought with the same blood, baptised in the same Church, nourished by the same sacraments, called to the same glory as thou ? Love him, therefore ; love all thy brethren : love even thine enemies ; and do good to those that persecute thee.¹ If thou lovest thine enemy, GOD will love thee ; if thou hatest him, GOD will hate thee ; if thou makest allowance for him, GOD will make allowance for thee ; and if thou condemnest him, GOD will condemn thee : for the LORD will deal with thee in the same measure in which thou shalt have dealt with others.²

3. Grieve for all the sins which thou hast committed during thy past life, in this point especially. Resolve

¹ S. Matt. v. 44.

² S. Matt. vii. 2.

to correct thyself and to be more ready to forgive that thou mayst obtain the more readily from GOD the thrice Holy, the forgiveness of thy sins : for our divine Master has certified in His Gospel that, “ if thou forgivest not men their trespasses, neither will thy heavenly FATHER forgive thy trespasses ; ”¹ and if, on the other hand, thou art merciful towards thy neighbour, GOD will show mercy to thee.

Colloquy.—I confess, O my GOD, that I have often nourished in my heart sentiments of hatred, aversion, and revenge. I confess that I have sinned in a thousand ways against the charity which I owe to my neighbour. O GOD, Whom I have so often wronged, I deserve that Thou shouldst not forgive me, who have delayed so long to be reconciled to those who have offended me ; but now I repent of all those sins which I have committed, I repent from the depth of my heart, and solely for love of Thee. Most humbly I ask Thy forgiveness and promise unto Thee that for the future I will be prompt to forgive all those who have done me wrong. Quench in me the fire of wrath, and make me to be gentle, patient, and ever ready to forget injuries. Strengthen my soul, in order that I may overcome my nature, so prone to hatred and revenge. I ask of Thee all these mercies in the name of that immensity of love which made Thee love the traitor Judas, notwithstanding his crime and perfidy. Yes, O JESUS, I love, for love of Thee, all those who have offended me ; and to please Thee, I will do them all the good in my power. Amen.

¹ S. Matt. vi. 14, 15.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Our LORD JESUS having finished the last supper, raised His eyes to heaven and returned thanks to His Eternal FATHER. It was to teach us that all we possess in this world, as well as all the blessings we enjoy, come to us from GOD ; and that consequently we ought ever to show forth our gratitude to Him for them by praising, thanking, and blessing Him for so many mercies which He vouchsafes to us, without any merit on our own part, and even when rather we deserve to be cast away far from Him, and punished as rebel slaves.

1. Return into thyself, and see what is thy gratitude towards so good a FATHER, and how thou correspondest to the many graces and favours which He daily lavishes on thee.

2. Examine thyself, whether during the day thou ever raisest thy heart to heaven, whence so many blessings come to thee. Shame be to thee if through thine ingratitude thou becomest like to those animals which possess not reason, and which are contented with greedily devouring the acorns which fall from the oaks of our forests, but never raise their eyes upward to the tree which produces them. Alas ! such has often been thy conduct towards GOD : thou hast been laden with His benefits, thou art so even still from day to day, and yet scarcely raisest thou thine eyes to heaven to thank Him ! Know at least how to humble thyself for this ! and acknowledge that thou indeed meritest that the LORD should withdraw His bountiful hand, and that instead of opening it to overwhelm thee with

mercies, He should closeit to punish thee by the withdrawal of His mercies and benefits.

3. Resolve to be henceforth more filled with gratitude towards GOD, applying thyself to His service and to the fulfilment of holiness with more resolution, diligence, and fervour, than thou hast done till now: and in order to begin at once, be this day faithful to all thy devotional exercises, omit not one of them, and fulfil them all with redoubled fervour and devotion.

Colloquy.—O God, Author of all good, I ought to be every moment thanking Thee for the numberless blessings which Thou ceasest not to grant me; and behold, up till now I have scarcely ever thought of them. I purpose to thank Thee henceforth many times each day, and to acknowledge that it is Thou Who hast created me, Who dost preserve me, and Who art the source of all the good things I have received and shall receive throughout all eternity. I have been guilty of a thousand acts of ingratitude towards Thee, by forgetting Thy gifts, by offending Thee, by insulting Thee with continual sins; but henceforth I will make reparation, by a holier and more fervent life. O my God, wherefore hast Thou never wearied of doing me good! How hast Thou refrained from chastising all my ingratitude! Thee I love, O God, Whose goodness and mercy are infinite; I will labour to love Thee more and more each day: I will be faithful to all my duties for love of Thee, and do all with a view to please Thee, and to acknowledge Thy benefits. Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Love poverty as JESUS CHRIST loved it : it is a hidden treasure whose price thou wilt know when thou shalt be in Heaven. Practise this evangelical virtue according to the state wherein Providence has placed thee. Wherefore detach thyself from the good things of this world ; moderate and regulate the desire to amass them ; possess them as not possessing them, and use them as not abusing them.¹ 2. Cut off from thy dress, from thy table, from thy furniture, all that which offends Christian moderation, and remember that superfluities of this kind are contrary to the promise which thou madest in thy baptism to renounce the pomps of the world. 3. If Providence gave thee thy birth in a low estate, submit without complaints or murmurs to the privations and labours of thy condition, and esteem it as that wherein thou mayest most easily save thy soul. Beware of giving thyself up to idleness, to evil courses, to prodigality, and to jealous hatred of those who are richer than thyself ; these are four sins common to the poor, sins which render them unworthy of the mercy of GOD or men, and which take from them all the merit of their sufferings. 4. If thou art rich, give not way to a foolish pride, but be humble in the reflection that thy state is one of opposition to JESUS CHRIST, Who lived and died poor. Remember that thy riches are not thine own, but that GOD has only confided them to thee as a trust, and that one day He will require of thee a strict account

¹ 1 Cor. vii. 31.

of the use thou hast made of them ; and then, woe to thee if thou hast abused them, and if thou hast been hard-hearted to the poor ! . . . Oh, how grievous it is to think that there is among us a great number of rich, and often very rich Christians, who know not what to do with their treasures, who spend them in sumptuous repasts, in brilliant entertainments, in ruinous festivities, and in a thousand vanities, and who refuse to nourish a poor widow dying of hunger at their gate ; who in the inclemency of winter give not clothing to an orphan whom cold is drawing slowly to the grave ; and who treat their suffering brethren with less regard than they would treat the vilest animals belonging to them. How lamentable to think that these same rich ones have always money at command to gratify all their caprices, and never a farthing to bestow when a good work is in question : a poor mechanic, a simple work-woman, will often deprive themselves of necessities to relieve those who are poorer than themselves, and these avaricious rich persons scarcely give the least portion of their superfluities to assist the unfortunate ! Oh, ye rich who read this book, never walk in their steps ; and make a better use of your gold, if ye will have your sins effaced and attain eternal glory !

2. Let not thy heart cleave to the world, or to any thing in the world ; for all therein is vanity, nothingness, and grief of mind ; its pleasures, riches, and glory, and honours, pass away with fearful rapidity : all these false possessions, says the wise man, disappear like a shadow, like a messenger who speeds, like a ship which cuts the waves, and leaves no trace behind it in the

troubled waters.¹ Where, indeed, is the might of those renowned monarchs who lived up to that day? Where are the riches of Crœsus and Solomon? Where is the beauty of Absalom, and so many others? Where the science, the erudition, the eloquence of the most illustrious scholars? All is passed, destroyed, and as it were annihilated. Oh, how true it is that the world is nothing! Oh, how vain and transitory is its glory! Very foolish is the man who loves, or courts, or cleaves to it. Rather a thousand times happier is he who despises it, who seeks GOD alone, and has centred in Him all the affections of his soul.

3. Be assured thou wilt never find happiness or repose in any creature, whatever it be. Be as rich as it is possible to be, grant to thy senses every sort of enjoyment, refuse nothing to thy caprice, enjoy the highest honours and distinctions, yet something will be ever wanting to thee; thy heart will be restless, thy desires unsatisfied, and thou wilt be compelled to exclaim with Solomon, "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity!"¹ On the other hand, love GOD, serve Him, mortify thy passions to please Him, and thou wilt feel a sweet peace spring up in thy soul; thou wilt repose tranquilly in the arms of the LORD, and thou wilt be happy. Try it, and thou wilt prove whether I deceive thee.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Never yield to revenge, and suffer not the least desire of it to arise in thy heart. Show thyself ever gentle, good, and merciful towards those who aggrieve

¹ Transierunt omnia illa tanquam umbra. (Sap. v. 9—11.)

² Vanitas vanitatum, et omnia vanitas. (Eccles. i. 2.)

thee ; it is the way to draw them towards thee, and to make friends of them. Moreover, think of the multitude of thy sins, and be assured that GOD will only forgive them thee in as far as thou hast thyself forgiven thy neighbour. Whoever will revenge himself shall meet the vengeance of the LORD, says the HOLY SPIRIT.¹

2. Read attentively the following history, and learn how dangerous it is to cherish sentiments of hatred or rancour against a fellow-creature.—There was at Antioch a priest named Sapricius. In the same town lived also a layman called Nicephorus. They loved each other as brothers ; but having afterwards some misunderstanding, they ended by becoming open enemies. However, Nicephorus being touched by the grace of GOD, recollected himself, and sought to be reconciled. He therefore besought his friends to go from him to the priest Sapricius, to ask his forgiveness and reconciliation ; but Sapricius would not forgive. After having taken this step several times without success, Nicephorus ran himself to the house of Sapricius, and prostrating himself at his feet, he cried out to him weeping, “ Forgive me in the name of JESUS CHRIST ! ” Sapricius remained hard and inflexible. However, persecution suddenly came on. Sapricius was arrested as a Christian, and presented before the tribunal of the judge, and put to violent torture, which he endured with heroic fortitude. Finally he was condemned to be beheaded. The sentence being pronounced, Sapricius was placed in the hands of the

¹ Qui vindicari vult, a Domino inveniet vindictam. (Eccl. xxviii. 1.)

executioners, and led to the place of suffering. Nicephorus hearing of it, ran and met him: and throwing himself at his feet, cried out, "Martyr of CHRIST! forgive me, for I have sinned against thee." Sapricius answered nothing and passed on.¹ Nicephorus rising, ran to another street through which Sapricius had to pass; as soon as he perceived him, he penetrated through the crowd, and casting himself before him, almost under his feet, exclaimed, "Martyr of CHRIST! forgive me, I have sinned against thee." But that implacable man would not so much as look upon him. What happened in consequence? He Who has said, "For give, that ye may be forgiven," withdrew His grace from the inflexible Sapricius, and deprived him for ever of the glory of martyrdom. For, being arrived at the scaffold, he became afraid to die, and asked permission to sacrifice to the gods. As for Nicephorus, he having witnessed with grief the apostasy of Sapricius, declared aloud that he was a Christian, gave his life for JESUS CHRIST, and ascended to Heaven to receive the three immortal crowns of faith, humility, and love, of which Sapricius had rendered himself so unworthy.

3. Pray especially to-day for all who have offended thee, or who wish thee evil: forgive them from the depth of thy heart, and beseech the LORD to grant them all the graces they need.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. There is a sin which exceedingly displeases the

¹ Martyr CHRISTI, ignosce mihi, si quid peccavi ut homo. Sapricius ad hoc ne verbulum quidem respondit. (Surius, *Acta Sanctorum.*)

paternal heart of GOD ; a sin unhappily too common even with those persons who make a profession of piety ; it is a want of fervour in thanking Him for the favours which He showers upon us each day. He complains in many portions of Holy Scripture, that, after having enriched men with blessings, He receives for the most part in return indifference and contempt from them : He shows Himself to be greatly displeased by such ingratitude, and we almost always find that He punishes it in a terrible manner. All the saints have anathematised it. "Ingratitude," says S. Bernard, "is the enemy of the soul, the destruction of merit, the plague of virtue. It is a scorching wind, which dries up all the channels of grace, and prevents Divine mercy from reaching us." "O my GOD," exclaims S. Augustine, "I will thank Thee unceasingly for Thy benefits ; because I know that ingratitude displeases Thee, and that it is one of the chief sources of all our spiritual evils!" "Yes," says S. Bernard, again, "wherever ingratitude is, there the grace of God finds no longer access."

2. If, therefore, thou art desirous to draw down the grace of heaven, and to make great advancement in virtue, thank GOD frequently for all the mercies He has vouchsafed to thee. Thy gratitude will be to Him exceedingly pleasing, and will assuredly cause Him to shed on thee more precious and abundant grace.

3. Therefore render Him thanks, not only to-day, but every day of thy life, for all the mercies wherewith He has enriched thee hitherto. Thank Him especially for having created thee in His image, given thee His SON for thy SAVIOUR and Friend, caused thee to be

born in the true Church, and regenerated thee in the waters of baptism. Thank Him for that infinite mercy by which He has forgiven thy sins and restored thee His love. Thank Him for not casting thee into hell, when thou wast living in iniquity, and for extending His goodness even to promising thee a crown of glory in Heaven, &c. &c. &c. In a word, thank Him at all times and in all things : and as a reward of thy gratitude, thou wilt receive signal marks of His tenderness.

MEDITATION IV.

JESUS WASHES HIS DISCIPLES' FEET.

FIRST SUBJECT.

OUR LORD having finished His last supper, and knowing that He was soon to leave this world to return to His FATHER, from Whom He had come, wished to give His Apostles, before parting from them, a distinct token of His humility. Therefore He rose from the table, and laid aside His garment, and girded Himself with a towel ; and when He poured water into a basin, He washed their feet, and wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded.¹

1. Observe that JESUS does all Himself ; He lays aside His garment, girds Himself with His own hands, and pours water into the basin ; yea, even with those Hands, which are the Hands of GOD, of which the touch alone healed the sick and raised the dead ; with those same Hands He washed and wiped the feet of

¹ S. John xiii. 3—5.

His disciples. This was not a mere ceremony ; it was an effectual service which He rendered to them all, and a service the most humiliating, since it was necessary not only to kneel down before them, but also to wash away the mire and dust which had gathered round their feet while walking barefoot, according to the custom in Judea.

2. What marvellous humility on the part of GOD ! JESUS is the Eternal King of ages ; the whole universe is full of His glory, the pillars of Heaven tremble in His Presence ; and behold Him prostrate on the earth before twelve men of the lowest condition. He washes and wipes their feet with His own sacred hands, even kisses them with His Divine lips.¹ But that which surpasses every wonder is, that He disdained not to kneel before the infamous Judas, and to render to that miserable traitor the same service as to the rest of the Apostles.² This is a mystery of humiliation which may well fill Heaven and earth with astonishment.

3. Try to fathom this mystery, and thou wilt discover a great lesson therein ; thou wilt see that JESUS, in consenting to humble Himself to such a point, did it solely to destroy within thee, even to its very root, the accursed pride which is ingrained in thee, which follows thee everywhere, and creeps into thy every deed ; it was to teach thee by His example with what humility thou shouldst treat thy brethren, and render

¹ Inclinat se summa majestas, et humilitatis Magister, usque ad piscatoris pedes incurvatus, et genibus flexis coram ipsis sedentibus. Lavat propriis manibus, abstergit, deosculaturque omnium eorum pedes. (S. Bonav. Meditationes Vitæ Christi, cap. 73.)

² Sed et illud superexaltat humilitatem, quod et ipsi proditori eadem obsequia ipse præbet. (Ibid.)

to them the services they have a right to expect from thee. Hast thou hitherto profited by so bright a lesson and so mighty an example? Alas, thou must confess to have done little or nothing; and if thou compare thyself with thy Divine Model, thou art compelled to own that there is a fearful contrast between thy conduct and His. Lo, JESUS, Who is God, humbles Himself even to nothingness, and makes Himself the servant of all; thou, who art nothing, art proud, disdainful, haughty, thou preferrest thyself to thy neighbour, who is perhaps of greater worth than thyself: seekest at every opportunity to exalt thyself above others, and strivest at all costs to pass for being something in the eyes of men; and when thou must render thy brethren some service which seems humiliating and mortifying to thy vanity and self-love, thou refusest disdainfully, and thinkest it strange it should have been suggested to thee. Oh, learn this day from JESUS CHRIST to recognise thy own nothingness, and to think it no longer a degradation to serve others.

4. But cast thine eyes once more upon our Divine SAVIOUR prostrated at the feet of His Apostles, and behold therein an open condemnation of another kind of pride which feeds upon thy heart. Because thou art rich and hast servants, or because thou hast reached a position thou deemest exalted, thou claimest a right to treat thy inferiors with indifference, coldness, and even contempt. Thou humblest them and degradest them by thine airs of grandeur; thou deemest them to be of another nature than thyself; thou no longer entertainest modest sentiments of thyself. Pride comes forth from thy whole being, and pitilessly crushes those

whom Providence has placed beneath thee. Guilty that thou art, how dost thou expose thyself to draw down the dreadful curses of Heaven ! Is it thus that JESUS CHRIST dealt with His Apostles, and even with Judas ? Is it thus He treated them ? Whoever thou art, therefore, in however brilliant a position the hand of the LORD has placed thee, return to a juster appreciation of what thou really art. Recognize thyself to be but dust and ashes, and nothing more ; acknowledge thyself to be a sinner who exaltest thyself very unreasonably above others in treating them harshly. In short, pray to the LORD to deliver thee from the spirit of pride, and to give thee in its place true humility ; and recall often to memory that saying of the wise man : “ The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God.”¹

Colloquy.—I adore Thee, O JESUS ! humbled at the feet of Thy disciples, especially those of Judas, I adore Thee. I admire Thy profound humility, and desire to imitate it, in shunning all the grandeurs of this world, in humbling myself as much as possible, and in consenting to be cast into or left in the lowest place. Hitherto, O my GOD, I have given myself up to vanity and ambitious desires ; I have sought to raise myself above others, I have despised my neighbour ; but now I detest all the sins that my pride has caused me to commit. I resolve to make reparation for them by honouring every person, by humbling myself from the depth of my heart, by submitting readily to every thing which can please or be useful to others, and by stifling in my soul every sentiment of haughtiness and

¹ Ecclus. iii. 18.

of arrogance. O my JESUS, Thou Who desirest that Thy disciples should be humble and like unto Thee, give me holy humility, and help me to practise its works; cause me to imitate Thy sacred example, and in all circumstances to follow the path of humility Thou hast traced for me! I hope of Thy goodness that Thou wilt give me this grace, and I ask it of Thee through the merits of Thy Passion. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Meditate upon what passed on this occasion between our LORD and S. Peter. The Apostle, through humility and respect for the greatness of JESUS CHRIST, would not suffer his Divine Master to humble Himself to wash his feet. But JESUS said unto him, "Peter, thou understandest not now what I do; but thou wilt understand it later; but I say unto thee, that if I wash thee not thou hast no part with Me." Peter, alarmed at this threat of a separation from Him, dared no longer to resist the will of the LORD, and said to Him with warmth, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head."¹

1. Learn to suffer, that CHRIST wash thee frequently by applying His blood to thee when truly penitent. Penitence is the salutary laver wherein our Divine SAVIOUR purifies us from all our spiritual stains! there the soul recovers with her innocence, calmness and peace of heart, there she becomes once more the friend of her God. Woe, woe unto thee, if thou refuse to enter this sacred bath; thou shalt have no part with JESUS either in this world or in the next. Learn also

¹ S. John xiii. 6—9.

to suffer, that JESUS CHRIST wash thee, by following the counsel and advice which He gives by the mouth of thy spiritual fathers, and by striving to fulfil the good inspirations which Heaven sends thee ; for the day will come when thou wilt desire to have followed them, and to have lived holily ; but then it will be too late, and thou wilt no longer be able to repair the time which is lost, and to save thy soul.

2. Pray GOD graciously to grant thee a deep contrition for thy sins, and an abundant fountain of tears, that, bitterly mourning for all the iniquities of thy past life, thy soul may be washed and cleansed, become once more pure, and be thus rendered worthy to receive one day the recompense which GOD has promised, and which HE will assuredly give to His faithful servants.

3. Weigh these words of JESUS CHRIST, "Thou knowest not now what I do," and know that they are addressed to thyself. How often, when it has pleased the LORD to try thee by permitting thee to have doubts respecting the mysteries of religion, and GOD's loving kindness towards thyself, and the course of His Providence, how often hast thou been troubled and disquieted, and hast even lost thy confidence ! How often hast thou in the depth of thy soul murmured against the LORD ! How often hast thou judged Him, and even condemned Him ! Poor blind creature, abase thyself for thy infidelity, and learn to-day, from the lips of thy Divine Master, that there are many things which man does not comprehend, whether in the designs of Providence or in the mysteries of redemption, or in the dealings of GOD towards us. Therefore, let

the LORD do His will, submit thyself to His guidance, trust to His mercy, yield thyself to His love, and whatever befall thee, abide in peace beneath the Divine hand. Wherefore wilt thou penetrate the hidden designs of the LORD with thee? Is He not too great and highly exalted to suffer us poor creatures to fathom the depth of His thoughts, and to tear away the mysterious veil wherewith He conceals Himself? Once more, submit thyself always to His guidance without questioning it; let it suffice thee to know that He is thy FATHER; bow thy head humbly in all the events of life; and reposing entirely in the loving kindness of GOD, adore Him, and hope in Him, and the time will come when thou shalt understand His designs for thy soul. Oh, happy wilt thou then be, if thou hast been humble and submissive!

Colloquy.—My LORD and my GOD, vouchsafe to grant me a full contrition for my past sins. Give me often the mind to make acts of grief and repentance, that I may purify my soul from all its stains. I purpose to make these acts many times a day, especially during the Holy Communion, and at night before taking my rest. Vouchsafe to recall to me my resolution, and suffer me not to be faithless to it. I resolve likewise to confess my sins frequently, that my soul may be purified from all the foulness of sin. I have a trust that Thy Divine mercy will forgive me all my iniquities; and in this hope, I will from this present moment, and for the remainder of my life, thank, bless, praise, and love Thee with my whole soul, until I have the happiness of beholding Thee in heaven. Moreover, O my GOD, I will no longer scrutinize with

proud curiosity the mysteries of Thy Providence ; my mind is too limited to be able to comprehend them. Therefore I abandon myself to Thy paternal guidance in this world. Do with me what pleaseth Thee ; wound, cut, pierce. If I wander from the right path, take such means as Thou seest good to make me return ; if I stop on the way, impel me, urge me on ; if I fall, raise me up ; if I am attacked, defend me ; if I should think of being unfaithful to Thee, punish me ; in a word, spare me not here, provided Thou spare me through eternity. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Our Divine SAVIOUR, after the washing of their feet, put His garments on Him again, sat down to table once more, and addressed His Apostles in these memorable words : “ Know ye what I have done unto you ? ye call Me Master and LORD, and ye say well, for so I am. If I, then, your LORD and Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also to wash one another’s feet ; for I have left you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.”¹

1. Meditate attentively on the deep sense of these words, and understand them as addressed to us, as well as to the Apostles. It is precisely as though JESUS CHRIST had said to each one of us : “ I, Who am thy God, thy LORD and Master, have humbled Myself to wash the feet of those who were My servants, My creatures, and the work of My hands ; therefore it is just that ye should also consent to humble and abase yourselves, not only to your superiors, but to those

¹ S. John xiii. 13—15.

also who are beneath you ; for true humility in a Christian consists in humbling himself to his inferiors.” Study for the future to put this lesson into practice.

2. “*Wash ye one another’s feet.*” By these words, the SAVIOUR teaches us to render to our brethren all the spiritual and corporal services which are in our power, even without being bound to do so. Every time then that an opportunity offers itself to help others, to render them some good office, how mean and abject soever, do not omit to do it ; for such is to thee an opportunity of washing their feet, according to the will of our SAVIOUR ; and if thou refuse, thou art unworthy to be His friend. Go and visit the poor, and carry help to them for the love of JESUS CHRIST ; smooth the bed where their suffering limbs seek repose ; enter the hovel of the poor man, share with him thy bread and thy clothing ; comfort the afflicted, by speaking to them of JESUS on the Cross. Admonish ye one another of your faults ; be always ready to excuse those of others ; and by this means thou wilt be a true disciple of JESUS CHRIST ; and thou wilt really, in obedience to Him, have washed the feet of thy brethren.

3. “*I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done unto you.*” These other words of our Divine Master teach us the strict obligation under which we all lie to show a good example to our fellow-creatures. Examine thy conscience upon that point ; be the judge of thyself. What example hast thou hitherto set to thy household, to thy brethren and sisters, to thy children, and to all with whom thou art acquainted ? Wert thou now on thy death-bed,

couldst thou say to them in all confidence, "Do as I have done ; for I have given you a good example?" Oh, for how much evil it may be hast thou to reproach thyself! How many souls are perhaps burning now in hell through thy fault! Oh, then mourn over thy neglect, beseech the LORD to forgive thy sins, and that He impute not to thee those of others ; and make the resolution to repair, through penitence, not only all the evil thou hast thyself done, but likewise that of which thou hast been the unhappy occasion in others. And if the LORD has placed thee in an exalted condition, remember that thou art more bound than others to show a good example ; for a bad one on thy part would be a horrible evil ; thou wouldest ruin more souls than many saints after great labour have led on to salvation. Oh, evil example, what a terrible thing thou art ! and yet where is the man who can bear witness in himself that he has never set it forth ?

Colloquy.—O Almighty Judge of angels and men, I accuse myself before Thee of having too often scandalised my neighbour by every kind of bad example, and I deserve to be cast from Thee ; but have pity on me, O my GOD ! I will correct myself of all my faults, and repair the evil I have caused to be committed, by showing henceforth an example of every Christian virtue. Consider my good desire, and remove from my conduct all which might displease Thee, and cause offence to my neighbour ; make me to become to others a model of charity, of faithfulness to Thy holy laws, of mortification and humility. Grant that at the hour of my death I may bear witness in myself that I have never been an occasion of offence or of

falling to any one; or else that, if I have formerly been so guilty, I have striven to make reparation by the labour of a true and sincere penitence. O JESUS, my love and my hope, fulfil my prayer! Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Pride is so deeply rooted in the heart of man, that to destroy it, JESUS CHRIST deigned to submit throughout His life to every sort of humiliation. Now pride is the greatest of vices; it is the source of every sin which is committed;¹ it was the cause of the fall of the evil angels, and of the first man; it opposes itself to GOD in a direct manner, attributing to itself that which belongs only to GOD; it disputes His glory, and seeks to reign in His stead. Pride is hateful to GOD, and is hated by man.² It produces a great number of sins and vices which holy doctors call its daughters. The principal are, "contempt of one's neighbour," whom the proud man regards and listens to only with disdain, because he imagines himself to be by far his superior, and worthier than him; "ambition," which is an immoderate desire to distinguish oneself from others, to exalt oneself above them, to obtain high places and dignities; "vanity," which is the desire to be an object of attention to others, and to obtain their approbation; "vain-glory," which makes one boast of the good qualities one has, and attribute often to oneself those one has not; "ostenta-

¹ Initium omnis peccati est superbia. (Ecclus. x. 13.)

² Odibilis coram Deo et hominibus superbia. (Ecclus. x. 7.)

tion," which is an affectation of showing off to others the advantages one possesses, whether in riches or in talents; "presumption," which is an ill-regulated inclination of the heart, by which man, in consequence of the good opinion he has of himself, undertakes with temerity things beyond his strength; "hypocrisy," whereby to win the esteem of men, we strive to seem better than we are in reality; "obstinacy," which makes us so perverse in our own way of seeing things, that we will not submit to the advice and commands of our superiors, and that we sometimes even arrive at hatred, contempt, and injuries.

2. Therefore flee from pride, and know that GOD resists the proud, and destroys them in His wrath. Flee from pride, because the other deadly sins follow in its train. In truth, the proud man is violent, wrathful, gloomy, sulky, because he thinks he never receives sufficient attentions; he is avaricious, because he knows that gold is a sure means of self-exaltation; he is vindictive, because he cannot forgive the mere semblance of contempt; he is envious, because he regards the elevation of another as his own abasement; he is unjust, because he thinks he owes nothing to any one, and that every one owes something to him; finally, he is often impure, because GOD, Who humbles the spirit through the body, suffers him to fall into shameful sins to confound him.¹ Flee, flee from

¹ Mater et regina septem capitalium vitiorum, superbia, non ingrediatur, neque requiescat in domicilio cordis mei, neque soboles ejus mihi adhæreat, id est, gula, concupiscentia, fornicatio, avaritia, invidia, tristitia, vana gloria. (S. Isidor. Exhort. ad Pœnit.)

Ipsa vitiorum regina superbia, cum devictum plenè conceperit,

pride, for it is a traitor which flatters thee, while leading thee through by-paths to the gulf of hell.

3. Wilt thou crush that pride which devours thee? labour to become humble; suffer in silence the contempt of men, and love it even as a blessing. Conceal the virtues which there might be in thee, and be not grieved at thy imperfections being discovered. Never speak of thyself, whether for good or evil; and prefer for the most part all that keeps thee unnoticed. Think often of thy past sins, of thy inclination to evil, and of thy great weakness. Be convinced that all the good thou canst do is little or nothing. And if at times the evil spirit of pride seeks to deceive thee by suggesting a good opinion of thy virtues, endeavours, and perfection, compare thy actions with those of the saints who are in Heaven, or who are still on earth; and when thou beholdest how far thou art from resembling them, thou wilt see that it becomes thee to take the lowest place as being thy due.¹ Imitate the conduct of the hermit of whom S. John Climacus speaks in his writings. This good hermit had written on the walls of his cell the names of the principal Christian virtues; and when the devil suggested to him some thought of pride, he said to the tempter, "Thou pretendest that I am a saint; well, let us come to the proof; and lifting his eyes, he read aloud what

mox illud septem principalibus vitiis, quasi quibusdam suis ducibus, devastandum tradit, ex quibus vitiorum multitudines oriuntur. (S. Gregor. Moral. lib. 32, cap. 7.)

¹ Compara te cum sanctis in cœlo: heu! quam prorsus nihil esse apparebis! Respice sanctos totius ecclesiæ, et cogeris dicere, Peccavi. (S. Thom. Theol. summa.)

he had written there. “*Perfect charity* :” the saints possessed it, said he, addressing himself to the devil, as though he had seen him with his eyes: but can I say that I possess it like them, I who do so little for God and for my neighbour? “*Deep humility* :” have I attained to it, I who yet feel the desire to be esteemed, and who dread contempt? “*Angelic chastity* :” have I it, I who at times am tormented by impure imaginations? “*Fervent prayer* :” do I pray fervently, I who am weighed down by distractions? &c. And when he had thus reviewed all these virtues, he said to the devil, “Thou seest that I am far from possessing those lovely virtues which the saints practised: but even had I attained thereto, and carried them to their highest degree of perfection, I should still be compelled to confess that I am an unprofitable servant; therefore depart, O father of lies!” By this habit he drove pride out of his heart, and in a short time attained to deep humility.¹ Do as this holy man did, and thou wilt become humble like him.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Have recourse often to the means of grace given thee for the destruction of thy sins, that JESUS may purify thee more and more from all the stains of thy soul; but be careful to fulfil the required conditions. These conditions may be reduced to three principal ones, viz., real contrition, firm resolution to sin no more, and an open and sincere confession. It is certain that many Christians derive no benefit from this, through want of contrition, because they have not

¹ S. Jean Climac. Scal. Parad. Grad. 25.

taken pains to excite it in their hearts, and have neglected to ask it of God, Who alone can give it to us. It is equally certain that many do not bring with them a firm determination to avoid sin, and all the opportunities which lead to it. And yet without contrition and firm determination, pardon is not to be received. Others hide their sins, and so find death in that which was ordained to restore life. Act in such wise that this calamity may never befall thee, and always prepare thyself with the greatest care for the reception of the Sacrament, lest any abuse thereof render thee yet more guilty. Above all, never hide thy sins.¹ Since thou wast not ashamed to commit thy sin, wherefore be ashamed to confess it? Is it not rather a great glory to acknowledge ourselves to have done wrong?² Besides, consider that a little shame now will bring thee the gift of pardon and the crown of immortality. Remember that if thou thyself reveal not thy fault to Him, God will reveal it to the whole world at the great day of judgment. What shame wilt thou then feel!³ Be resolute, therefore; lay open thy soul entirely at

¹ Non confundaris confiteri peccata tua. (Eccl. iv. 26.) Heu! cur erubescis confiteri, quod facere nequaquam erubuisti? (S. Aug. lib. ii. cap. 5, De Visit. Infirmorum.) Cur te pudet peccatum tuum dicere, quem non puduit facere? . . . O perversitas, non pudet inquinari, et ablui pudet! (S. Bernard. Epist. 185.)

² Confunderis et erubescis confiteri peccata? Confusio est peccare, non verò peccata confiteri. (S. Chrys. de Pœnit. et Confes.)

³ Si tu non revelaberis peccatum tuum, revelabitur a Deo. (S. Thom. a Villanov. Serm. in Fer. 6, post Dom. iv. Quadr.) Ne peccatum confiteri graveris, ut per hujus vitæ pudorem, futuri sæculi ignominiam fugias. (S. Greg. Naz. Orat. in Baptism.)

all times to thy GOD ; hide nothing from Him, whatever repugnance thou mayest feel towards it ; and this momentary shame will bring thee eternal glory with Him, and before men.

2. Thou hopest that GOD has forgiven thee the sins of thy life past, and that He has restored thee to His favour and love ; thou doest well to hope it, because GOD is a tender FATHER to us, and is pleased to treat us with goodness and mercy. But thou must not therefore, cease to regret every day : and although the LORD has vouchsafed to forget thy offences, thou must not thyself for a moment forget them ; but rather think of them every day with grief, in order thereby to nourish in thy soul the spirit of penitence and compunction. Thus did all the saints. David, after receiving from heaven the assurance of his forgiveness, had not therefore his sin less continually present to his memory. S. Peter mourned all through his life for his miserable sin in denying his Divine Master. S. Mary Magdalene, notwithstanding all the favours she had received from JESUS CHRIST while He was on earth, yet is reported to have wept for the wanderings of her youth, during the thirty years she afterwards passed in solitude. S. Thais, a penitent, believing herself no longer worthy to pronounce the holy name of GOD, addressed to him, during three years, only this humble prayer, "O Thou Who hast created me, have pity on me!"¹ and having received the assurance that the LORD had forgiven her everything, yet she ceased not to be sorry for the past till her death. Imitate these touching examples, and pass not a single day

¹ Qui plasmasti me, miserere mei !

without bewailing thy past ingratitude towards Him from Whom thou hast received only good.

3. It is a presumptuous pride which leads man to search into the mysteries of the providence of God. In truth, what is man, if not an abyss of ignorance and darkness? And behold, this poor blind man dares to pass Judgment on the conduct of Him Who is Greatness and Wisdom, to call Him to account, and to condemn Him! Do thou never fall into such madness. Seek not to explain that which is beyond thee, and fathom not that which is too deep for thee.¹ What! canst thou not give a reason for those things which are apparently most simple, which happen before thine eyes, and pretendest thou to understand the works of the Most High?² Darest thou to say, “Wherefore doth God act thus? Wherefore doth He permit this calamity? Wherefore is the righteous man so often unhappy and persecuted, whilst the wicked man prospers and is loaded with honours?” Insensate, believest thou not in the justice, wisdom, and goodness of Him Who governs at His Will all the events of life? Can thy limited sight perceive the imperceptible springs which He sets in motion? Canst thou fathom the abyss of His thoughts? Think of what thou art, and remember that he who scrutinises the majesty of God will be overwhelmed by His glory.³ A day will come,

¹ Altiora te ne quæsieris, et fortiora te ne scrutatus fueris. (Ecclus. iii. 21.)

² Difficile æstimamus, quæ in terra sunt, et quæ in prospectu sunt invenimus cum labore: quæ autem in cœlis sunt, quis investigabit? (Sap. ix. 16.)

³ Qui scrutator est majestatis, opprimetur a gloria. (Prov. xxv. 27.)

the day of eternity, when thou wilt understand that which thou understandest not to-day. The day will come when the deep mysteries of religion, as likewise the no less mysterious ways of Providence, will be unfolded to thee, and thou wilt see clearly how marvellous God has been in all things. Thou wilt see the height of the wisdom of His thoughts, the justice which ruled all events, the mercy which directed them, and thou wilt be constrained to exclaim with transport: "O God, Thou art wisdom, and Thy judgments are full of love and equity!"

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Be never weary of exercising humility on all occasions, since JESUS, thy model, is not weary of giving thee in Himself excellent examples thereof. Now true humility consists in rightly knowing thyself, in realising how poor and miserable thou art, and in referring to God alone the merit of whatever there is good in thee.¹ It was ever the root of all virtues, and without it the angels themselves could not preserve their holiness in Heaven.² It was infinitely dear to the Heart of our Divine Master; each day of His mortal life was marked by some act of humility, and He commended it to us as much by His example as by His words. If, then, thou wilt please Him and become a saint, be humble, not only in speech, which is

¹ *Humilitas est virtus, qua homo verissima sui agnitione sibi ipsi vilescit.* (S. Bernard.)

² *Fundamentum sanctitatis semper fuit humilitas; nec in cœlo stare potuit superba sublimitas.* (S. Cypr. Tract. de Nativ. Christi.)

easy, but in sincerity, and from the depth of thy heart. Let not the contempt of men or their evil dealings towards thyself rouse thine inward indignation, but endure all with patience and even with joy ; for such is the means to attain speedily the possession of that excellent virtue. Regard it as a treasure above price, and be convinced that, even if thou shouldst perform miracles, thou wouldst be in the eyes of GOD only an object of abomination, if humility were wanting in thee. Ask it, then, of the LORD, every day, and lose not the smallest opportunity of performing acts thereof.

2. Bad example, and above all on the part of superiors, is a dreadful evil, on account of its consequences. It teaches what is wrong to those who know it not, and draws on those who before held it in horror. One man, by bad example, commits more evil than the saints for the most part have done good ; he causes the loss of more souls than the most zealous preachers have been the means of saving. And yet how does the world abound with bad examples ! Hast thou never set forth any ? never been to any one an occasion of scandal or of falling ? Search into the inmost recesses of thy conscience, and strive seriously to repair from to-day all the evil thou hast caused others to commit. The thing is serious ; thy salvation is in question ; therefore put thy hand immediately to the work ; to-morrow may be too late.

3. The best way of making reparation for bad example is to set for the future a good one. Good examples instruct men in themselves, and are a thousand times more persuasive than the most eloquent words. Formerly thou didst neglect the observance

of thy religious duties, henceforth be attentive to them in the sight of all men. Formerly thou wast frivolous in thy words and actions, now show thyself to be serious and reserved in all things. Formerly thou hadst pleasure in backbiting thy neighbour, to-day respect his reputation as being his most precious possession ; and so in every thing else. Pray likewise for all whom thou hast perchance injured, and beseech the LORD that He lay not to thy charge the sins which thou hast caused others to commit. Thus thou wilt, as far as lies in thy power, undo the evil which thy wicked example caused, and the LORD will have mercy on thee.

MEDITATION V.

ON THE INSTITUTION OF THE MOST HOLY SACRAMENT OF THE EUCHARIST.

FIRST SUBJECT.

THE moment had arrived when JESUS was to sacrifice His life for us on the cross, and leave this world, to return to the bosom of His FATHER. But as He would not leave us comfortless in this world of exile, He found a way, among the inexhaustible inventions of His love, to remain really with us to the end of ages ; while at the same time He should be in heavenly glory at the right hand of GOD. With this intention He instituted the most holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. Therefore, after having washed the feet of His Apos-

tles, He sat at table with them, and taking into His venerable and sacred hands one of the loaves which were by, He gave thanks, blessed the bread, brake it, and distributed it to them, saying, "Take, eat; this is My Body."

1. Our Divine Master, throughout His mortal life, did nothing by chance, and all His actions are excellent lessons to us. In this circumstance we see that He would have the washing of the feet to precede the institution of the Sacrament of the Eucharist, and it was not without reason that He acted thus. His intention was to show us how great should be the purity of those who desire to receive the holy Communion. What, indeed, do we receive in this adorable Sacrament? the body and blood of JESUS CHRIST, of Him Who is all sanctity, of Him Who above all hates iniquity, and sees uncleanness even in the angels. This is wherefore, even if thou communicate once only in thy life, thou shouldst employ every moment of thy existence in preparing for it: thou couldst never do too much, and thou mightest say in all truth with the humble centurion, "LORD, I am not worthy." And what should not be the feeling of thy unworthiness, when thy conscience is thy witness that thou preparest so little and so ill for the reception of thy SAVIOUR? If the greatest saints looked upon themselves as impure, when they compared their holiness with the infinite holiness of GOD, what must thou then think of thyself, thou who hast not a shadow of their perfection? Humble thyself deeply before the LORD, and make a firm resolution never more to approach the holy altar before having washed thy soul from its

slightest soils in the tears of penitence. Ask forgiveness of GOD for the faults thou hast committed in thy past communions, and the want of preparation wherewith thou hast come. Alas, how often hast thou partaken of that bread of angels with a soul stained with little sins committed in frivolity, and filled with too earthly attachments! How often hast thou communicated with scarcely any devotion, or from custom, and perchance at times with no thought whatever of the holy action thou wast fulfilling? Hast thou not even wherewith to reproach thyself for unworthy and sacrilegious communion? Oh, what just causes for sorrow and mourning hast thou, if thou judge thyself impartially!

2. Our LORD JESUS CHRIST, before He instituted the Eucharist, raised His eyes to Heaven, and returned thanks to GOD His FATHER, to teach us that, before beginning any action, we should be careful to raise our heart to the LORD, from Whom all good proceeds, and to direct our intention towards Him, that our action may be agreeable to Him. Hast thou not often failed hitherto in this holy and salutary exercise? Canst thou say in all truth, that all thy thoughts, words, and works have been offered to GOD, having His glory alone for their object? Ah, follow henceforth the counsel of the Apostles, and whether thou eat or drink, or whatever thou do, do all to please thy FATHER Who is in Heaven.¹ Imitate thy Divine

¹ Sive manducatis, sive bibitis, sive aliud quid facitis, omnia ad gloriam Dei facite. (1 Cor. x. 31.) Omne quodcumque facitis in verbo et opere, omnia in gloriam Dei facite. (Coloss. iii. 17.)

SAVIOUR, Who sought not His own glory in His actions, but only the glory of Him Who had sent Him.¹ Imitate the good man who said continually, "All for the greater glory of GOD." Imitate her whose burden ever was, "All for GOD, all for GOD!" Imitate that other saint who offered to JESUS all her thoughts, her affections, her being, and who prayed Him to accept as so many acts of love each pulsation of her heart. Imitate all the saints, whose actions, however mean and contemptible in the eyes of men, became precious in the eyes of GOD, because of the pure and upright intention which accompanied them; and remember that all thou hast not done as in the sight of GOD will avail thee nothing through eternity.

3. Our LORD broke the bread into several pieces, to teach thee that one of the best preparations thou canst make for the reception of the Eucharist is to break, through mortification, thine irregular inclinations and thy self-will. Without the continual exercise of this mortification, thy communions will avail thee little, because thy soul will resemble an uncultivated ground covered with thorns, and the grace conveyed to thee by the Sacrament of the Eucharist will be able neither to spring up nor develope itself. On the contrary, if thou art careful to be ever mortifying thy pride, thy impatience and idleness, and all thy passions, thy soul will resemble a well-prepared soil, and the divine seed cast therein by the Holy Communion will bring forth abundant fruits of grace and benediction.

Colloquy.—I believe, O my GOD, that Thou hast
¹ *Ego autem non quæro gloriam meam. (S. John viii. 50.)*

made Thyself our food in the Eucharist for the salvation of our souls; and I thank Thee for this infinitely precious blessing. I desire to receive Thee always with benefit, wherefore I firmly resolve to prepare myself for the Holy Communion by acts of contrition and penitence, that my soul may be thereby purified from all its stains, even the least. Moreover, O my GOD, I will impose upon myself at all times some discipline of my will and of my senses, with the intention of offering them to Thee as a preparation for this adorable Sacrament. Enlighten my mind, and cause me to know Thy greatness and Thine infinite perfections, that I may receive Thee with deep reverence, and a love of true sonship. O JESUS! Who art the Bread of Life, I love Thee with my whole heart; and to increase within me this fire of Thy love, I will often receive Thee in the Eucharist. Vouchsafe, I pray Thee, to render me less unworthy, and give me the right disposition of heart, that I may communicate at all times profitably. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Our LORD, in instituting the Eucharist, chose bread to be the outward sign of this Sacrament in preference to every other thing, because bread being the nourishment of all men, and our daily food, He willed that each of us should live in such a manner as to have the happiness of communicating daily, after the example of the first Christians, who, by the account of S. Luke, let not a single day pass without communicating.

1. Dost thou fulfil the will of JESUS CHRIST? and

dost thou feed every day on His divine flesh?¹ Art thou not rather, it may be, one of those unwise Christians, who communicate rarely, and find a thousand pretexts for absenting themselves from the Holy Table? Thou knowest, nevertheless, that our gracious SAVIOUR invites every one to receive the Holy Eucharist. He invites the sick, that He may heal them; the blind, that He may give them sight; the weak, that He may strengthen them; the afflicted, that He may console them; sinners, that He may sanctify them; the holy, that He may maintain them in their fervour, and prevent them from relaxing. Thou knowest likewise that He says to the unfaithful soul which eats not His Flesh and drinks not His Blood, that there is no life in her.² Therefore communicate, and that frequently. Thy greatest regret should be a deprivation of that heavenly food. Besides, do not thy weaknesses and dangers make thee sufficiently feel the need thou hast of this thy daily bread? Again, communicate because, in the reception of the Holy Eucharist, thou wilt find strength against thine enemies, consolation in thy troubles, peace of mind, courage in thy necessary warfare against hell, and above all, the

¹ Although in the English Church there is hardly any church in which there is a daily celebration of the Holy Eucharist, and therefore the injunctions in the text are impossible, yet the editor has not thought himself justified in altering them, because there is no doubt that in the primitive Church the Eucharist was celebrated, if not received, daily; and the cessation of the daily sacrifice is one of the defects of the English Church, which, with good Bishop Andrewes, we must pray to have supplied.

² Nisi manducaveritis carnem Filii hominis, non habebitis vitam in vobis. (S. John vi. 53.)

pledge of eternal life. The oftener thou communicatest in faith, the more thou wilt learn to do it well.

2. Yet imagine not that frequent communion constitutes holiness and perfection, and that thy salvation is secure because thou communicatest often; such would be a highly dangerous delusion, against which thou must be on thy guard. A holy life consists not precisely in communicating frequently, but in benefiting by communions, by availing ourselves of the grace which they bestow, to labour to purify ourselves more and more. If, then, thy frequent communions serve not to render thee more humble, more meek, more patient, more self-denying, thou hast cause to fear that they will become to thee an occasion of presumption and of pride. Beseech the LORD to avert from thee so terrible an evil, and resolve to live every day in such a manner, that thou mayest deserve to receive JESUS CHRIST daily in a way profitable to thy advancement in perfection.

Colloquy.—O my SAVIOUR, I adore Thee! I rejoice with Thee for the fervour and piety wherewith the first Christians communicated. May I have a purity and holiness of life like unto theirs, in order that I may communicate frequently! Wherefore have my sins and lukewarmness deprived me so long of so great a blessing? O my GOD, help me to change my life, and to tear from my heart these evil roots of sin, that they may no longer prevent my frequent approach to Thy holy table! Correct my habits, change my heart, purify it, sanctify it by Thy gifts; because I desire to unite it to Thee by the most perfect bonds

of love, and to make it fit to receive thee as often as my spiritual director shall deem it to be for Thy glory and my salvation. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Consider how generous was the love which JESUS showed us in the institution of the adorable Sacrament. At the same moment that Judas sought opportunity to deliver Him to the Jews, at the moment when these were setting all to work to cause His death, even then it was that He vouchsafed to give Himself to be our food, and that He prepared for us a sacred Feast, whence our souls might draw in eternal life. Then it was that He gave the Sacrament of His Body and Blood, under the form of bread and wine, to remain with us to the end of all ages. He loved us! and to give the greatest proof of love, He humbled Himself thus.

1. Is it thus that thou actest towards GOD? Where is the love which urges thee to His service? Where are the sacrifices that thou makest for His glory? He commands thee to be constantly faithful to all His laws; He requires all thy thoughts, actions, and affections to be His own: and assuredly He has a right to them after all He has done for thee. Well, show us thy works, the fervour of thy prayers, religious readings, and communions. Let us see thy progress in the exercise of humility, mortification, recollection, and penitence. Alas, confess sincerely that until this day thou hast served the LORD with an indifference which should load thee with shame! Until this day the slightest confusion, the least restraint has often suf-

ficed to turn thee away from thy religious exercises, and sometimes even to cast thee into such discouragement that thou hast neglected thy accustomed prayers, confessions, communions, and the few good things thou couldst do. What weakness and cowardice !

2. Is it with coldness like this that JESUS CHRIST loved thee ? Did the hardest and most cruel sacrifices discourage Him in the work of thy redemption ? Did they hinder Him from giving Himself wholly to thee, and from loading thee with favours ? Did they turn Him away from the institution of the Eucharist ? Cowardly soul, learn to be henceforth less unworthy to belong to such a Master. Be more generous in bearing the weariness and the difficulties which sometimes present themselves in the exercise of holiness. Formerly thou omittedst thy prayers too readily, or prayedst without attention, reverence, or devotion and consequently without a blessing ; but now pray with love and fervour. Formerly thou didst make thy preparation for Communion without resolution of amendment ; but now do so with humility and with care, as though thou wert to die immediately after. Formerly thy Communions were lukewarm, without fervour, without that living faith so necessary for them to profit us ; communicate now with that spiritual hunger which all the saints had, and which opened their hearts to the abundance of heavenly graces. Formerly thou leddest an effeminate, carnal, sensual life ; to-day let angelic purity dwell in thy body of clay, mortify thy senses and thy passions, and thus prove to JESUS that thou hast both knowledge and will to render Him sacrifice for sacrifice.

Colloquy.—O good JESUS, how true is it that Thy love for man is Divine! Not satisfied with shedding Thy Blood for our salvation unto the last drop, Thou hast willed moreover to remain with us, the Companion of our pilgrimage, our Food, our Counsellor, our Friend, in the Sacrament of the Altar. Our ingratitude, and outrages, and treachery have not estranged Thee from Thy children: and Thou abidest night and day with them, making Thy power and love to shine forth. Be Thou a thousandfold blessed, O gracious SAVIOUR! Grant me, I beseech Thee, the grace to be grateful for so much lovingkindness from Thee, and cause me to be never separated from Thee. Teach me to detach myself from all creatures, and to be attached to Thee alone. Give me strength to renounce the sensual life I have led hitherto, to walk evermore in the path of mortification, to do Thy will, and to sacrifice myself wholly to Thy service. Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. If thou wouldest know why it is that, after so many Communions, thou still makest little progress in the ways of GOD, it is that thou makest a bad preparation for the reception of this Divine Sacrament. Fire readily kindles dry wood, but it cannot ignite that which is green, because the latter has not the requisite properties for burning. The saints derived great benefit from their Communions, because they had made devout preparation for them. Imitate their example, and thou wilt receive, like them, precious

graces in communicating. Wherefore, familiarise thyself with the following exercises: (1.) Offer to GOD from the eve of thy Communion, all thy actions in union with those of JESUS CHRIST, to obtain the graces thou needest to approach the holy table worthily. (2.) Maintain thyself throughout the day in a greater recollectedness, and watchfulness over all the movements of thy heart, that none may soil its purity. (3.) Take for the subject of thy ejaculatory prayers some passages which denote the desire thou hast to communicate or the acknowledgment of thy unworthiness. (4.) Make, with this intention, some act of mortification, and do some good work, such as visiting the poor: it is a suitable way of preparation for the reception of our LORD's visit, to visit Him in His members. (5.) Before going to rest, think upon the happiness which will be thine the next morning in communicating, and pray that thy angel may guard thee through the night, that nothing may befall thee contrary to the purity which the reception of so great a mercy will require of thee. (6.) The morning of thy Communion, as soon as thou art awake, imagine thy guardian angel saying to thee, "Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go thou forth to meet Him." (7.) Keep strict silence, in as far as thou canst, and maintain thyself in much recollection until communion, laying aside all business, except what cannot be deferred. (8.) Say often to thyself, Who cometh? CHRIST cometh. To whom cometh He? To a man, a worm of the earth, a sinner. Wherefore cometh He? To give Himself to me, and to unite Himself to me. (9.) Be present at Communion with redoubled reverence, attention, and devotion.

(10.) Finally, when the moment of communicating approaches, make acts of lively faith in this mystery, of adoration, desire, confidence, love ; and be certain that, after so careful a preparation, thou wilt communicate with great benefit.¹ As for the act of thanksgiving after Communion, spend all the time there that thou canst, without omitting any other duties. There is no prayer more acceptable to GOD, than that which is offered to Him after the Holy Communion. During the few minutes or the half hour which follows that happy moment, a soul should commune with JESUS in affection and prayers. The pious affections we breathe forth at that time have more weight in the sight of GOD than those we give utterance to under any other circumstances, because they derive a greater blessing from the presence of CHRIST, Who is united to the soul. JESUS is pleased at that time above all others to hear them favourably, and this should be a powerful motive for thy trust.

2. Never fail to offer to GOD all thy actions ; and never act with another intention than that of pleasing Him. Without this purity of intention, thou wilt never have a right to hope for a reward in heaven, even after much toil. When thou doest anything aright, beware of seeking the looks and approbation of men, but refer the glory to GOD only. Oh, if thou knewest all the treasures thou mightest amass in a short time by purity of intention ! By this how many saints have attained a high degree of glory in Heaven, though

¹ Majorem efficaciam credo quod accipiat homo in una mandatione cum bona præparatione, quam in multis, si non se præparet diligenter. (S. Bonav.)

on earth they did nothing marvellous in the eyes of men ; by it many have become pleasing to GOD, though they apparently laboured little ; and by it they found the great secret of turning all to profit, and of acquiring excellent perfection, though only performing very ordinary and indifferent actions. Walk in their steps, and thou wilt find the means of becoming rich like them.

3. Mortification is absolutely necessary to thee if thou wouldest save thy soul. Regard it not as a work of supererogation, good only for those who aspire to a high perfection. No, it is for all persons, and for thee in particular, a real obligation ; to such a degree, that if thou shouldst refuse to lead a penitent and mortified life, thou renouncest thereby in some measure the blessed title of Christian and disciple of JESUS CHRIST. "If any man will be My disciple," says the SAVIOUR, "let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily;"¹ that is to say, let him mortify his flesh, his senses, and his passions. He must hate himself ; that is, he must repress, at what cost soever, the irregular motions of his mind, and that under pain of eternal damnation. There is no other way to go to Heaven but the narrow way ; consequently it is an indispensable obligation to enter thereby, if one will arrive at that happy abode. JESUS CHRIST, our GOD and our pattern, denied Himself every day of His life. All the saints imitated Him, and thou canst not find one who has not entered Heaven through the path of mortification. Refuse no longer, then, to deny thyself as they did, if thou wouldest become a saint like them. Maintain an unre-

¹ Si quis vult venire post me, abneget semetipsum, tollat crucem suam quotidiè, et sequatur me. (S. Luke ix.)

mitting conflict with thy passions, and mortify them without ceasing. Since thy body is still stained with the mire of thine old sins, purify it by pain and privations. Take courage; the mortification of the soul and body is not so hard as it appears to be, and its benefits are immense. Moreover, if thou spare thyself in this life, GOD will not spare thee in the next; while on the contrary, if thou punish thyself, GOD will not punish thee, and will one day make thee a sharer in His glory and happiness. The choice is thine.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. The devil, knowing all the spiritual blessings wherewith the Holy Communion enriches the soul which receives it worthily, sets all in action to keep away Christians therefrom. Disgust, weariness, servile fear, indifference, all serve his purpose, provided he attains his end; and unhappily he succeeds too often. How many Christians, alas! are there who have left off communicating! How many, also, are ingenious in inventing excuses for lessening the number of their Communions! Ah, they are all blind and worthy of compassion! They deprive themselves of the precious graces which GOD destined for them, and perhaps are for ever closing against themselves the gates of the heavenly country. Pray for them that GOD may come to their aid and convert them; but imitate them not. Rather make Communion to be thy happiness, and live in such wise that thou mayest receive it often.

2. In order to excite within thyself more and more a desire to receive the Body of JESUS CHRIST often in

the Eucharist, reflect upon the immense benefits which are vouchsafed to thee in Communion : 1st. Thou receivest the adorable Body and Blood of our LORD, with the merits of His Passion. In other ordinances JESUS CHRIST communicates to us His grace by the creatures which are their visible signs, as water ; but in the Eucharist He gives Himself, confers His grace by Himself, which is consequently incomparably greater than in the other Sacraments. What happiness, like the holy Simeon, to take JESUS to our bosom ! to receive Him into our hearts ! to make, so to speak, a transfer of our heart and His : for He takes away ours and gives us His own ! Oh, what a physician, who gives Himself to His patient for his cure, who enters within him, and bestows all the powers of His soul to re-establish him in health ! 2nd. Besides the sanctifying grace which JESUS CHRIST increases, He communicates to the soul a gift of faith, enlightening it with heavenly light to believe that great mystery and the other truths of our religion, and making it taste what it does not understand : for the nearer we approach the sun, the more light we receive. Moreover, hope acquires in the Eucharist a wonderful strength and courage, JESUS CHRIST having testified that "whoso eateth this Bread shall live for ever." 3rd. But the principal effect of this Sacrament of love is to produce love in him who receives it, to increase in him charity and devotion, to enrich him with the virtues and gifts of the HOLY SPIRIT. As a house in flames sets fire to the one which joins it, so the Heart of JESUS, which is all love, entering into ours, kindles it and sets it all on fire. 4th. Another most important effect of the

Eucharist is to fortify us against the temptations of the devil, and especially against the temptations of the flesh, which are the most furious and dangerous of all. The sin of Adam has made deep wounds in our soul and body. All the other ordinances are instituted to heal the wounds of the soul: but the principal end of the Eucharist is to heal the most deadly wound of our body, which is called concupiscence. In Communion, it is the most pure flesh of JESUS CHRIST which communicates to ours its virgin graces; it is the Blood which He received from Mary which purifies ours, tainted and corrupted by sin. 5th. Finally, this Sacrament makes all the faithful who receive it to be one body, soul, heart, and mind. It is the perfect bond of charity between all the members of one body. Wherefore those who eat of that Bread with hatred in their heart, eat to themselves condemnation; and those who, after communicating, are not more meek, give cause to fear that they have eaten and drunken unworthily. Charity towards our neighbour should always precede and follow Communion; for it is the preparation thereto and the fruit thereof.

2. Happy, then, are they who are called to the marriage-feast of the Lamb! Happier they who, being fit, eat thereof! Most happy they who frequently eat, and labour to become less and less unworthy thereof! these have the marks of their salvation, and an almost certain pledge of their predestination.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. What is lukewarmness? It is the truly deplorable condition of a soul which frequently commits

little sins with readiness, and repents of them feebly, and gives itself no trouble to avoid them, under plea of their being but small faults ; it is the state of a soul which easily omits its devotions, prayers, and Communions ; a soul which lives in continual dissipation, and which shrinks not from anything so much as the being obliged to withdraw into herself to observe her ways, to guard the motions of her heart, and to know all the intricacies of her ill-regulated conscience. It is a dangerous condition ; for he who so easily omits his pious exercises, and who falls into voluntary and habitual sin, without taking care to correct himself of it, will not remain where he has fallen, but will roll on farther down into the abyss.¹ These lesser sins, so often repeated, will render his soul so weak, that when some violent temptation shall assail it, it will not have the strength to resist, and it will fall. I have already said, that thou canst not persevere in the path of salvation without the special help of the grace of the LORD ;² and this special help God will justly refuse thee if thou scruple not to commit voluntary venial sins. He who sows little reaps little ;³ and if thou actest niggardly toward God, certainly He will not be liberal towards thee. Woe to thee, then, if thou livest in peace with a conscience loaded with little sins. Thou wilt go on from bad to worse, and thou wilt fall at last to the bottom of the precipice. Haste, then, to arouse thy apathy, if thou wouldest not be lost.

¹ Nunquam illic anima quo cadit jacet. (S. Greg. Moral. v. 25.)

² Si quis dixerit justificatum, vel sine speciali auxilio Dei in acceptâ justitiâ perseverare posse : anathema sit. (Conc. Trid. Sess. vi. Can. 22.)

³ Qui parcè seminat, parcè et metet. (2 Cor. ix. 6.)

For this three things are necessary : 1st. Thou must excite within thyself a willing and sincere desire to come out of that unhappy state. 2nd. It is necessary to keep at a distance from every occasion of falling, without which there is no hope of amendment. 3rd. Thou must frequently commend thyself to GOD ; pray to Him earnestly to help thee to do better, and not cease to pray until thou be completely changed. Begin from this moment the work of thy return to a fervent life, and labour strenuously to maintain thyself therein to thy last breath.

2. It is not a rare thing to meet with souls full of good will, who have a great desire to serve GOD faithfully, but who at the slightest obstacle are frightened, grow troubled, are discouraged in what is good, and sometimes even forsake every practice of piety. They imagine that everything in the spiritual life should be according to their will, and they think they only please GOD when they feel His consolations. If they experience a certain spiritual enjoyment when they approach the Holy Table,—if they shed a few tears while confessing their sins,—if their heart is touched and softened when they are hearing or reading the Word of GOD,—from that time they think all is right, and their faithfulness may be depended upon : they will do for GOD all the most hard and difficult things. But should weariness, disgust, dryness, temptations, and all the miseries belonging to our corrupt nature come and assail them, they think themselves lost and forsaken of GOD, and they have no more courage for any thing. They yield to every sort of despair, and often in vexation fall back into their old irregularities. Oh,

it is not thus thou shouldst serve the L ORD ! Thou shouldst be ever His, whether He console thee or leave thee forsaken ; thou shouldst always do what depends on thee to please Him, and feel assured that thou art really pleasing Him, though thy heart remains dry and cold ; thou shouldst know, finally, that it is just in such moments of disgust thou must redouble thy faithfulness to all thy duties, well convinced that G OD will not leave unrewarded thy zeal in serving Him. And even if thou shouldst have had the misfortune, through weakness or surprise, to commit any serious fault, yield not thyself to despondency. Arise as quickly as thou canst ; groan for thy misery ; ask forgiveness for thy sin. The L ORD is gracious ; His mercy is infinite ; He will forgive thee, thou mayest hope. The worst which can in this case happen to thee would be if thou becamest discouraged. Therefore, believe me, notwithstanding thy disgust, thy spiritual drynesses, and thy faults, be thou never discouraged ; and be assured that, with G OD's grace, however poor and miserable thy soul be, thou wilt at length win its salvation.

3. Since G OD has deemed no sacrifice too great to do thee good, be thou grateful towards Him, and strive to render Him, as far as is possible for a poor creature, love for His love. The L ORD loves above all, that they who serve Him should yield Him an unreserved service ; those He is pleased to load with benefits. A soul, on the contrary, which reckons with G OD continually, granting to His service only what she absolutely must, who makes no more effort than just what is requisite in order not to be damned, and no more,

will never be the object of His special favours and graces. Be then liberal to Him, and He will be so to thee ; forget thyself, to think only of His glory, and He will not forget thee ; consecrate to Him gladly thy body, thy soul, thy talents, thy time, thy whole being, and He will consecrate Himself to thy happiness. Be persuaded thou canst never outweigh the bounty of God ; the more thou labourest for Him, the more He will take thought for thee ; if thou art His devoted servant, He will minister to thee, protect thee, treat thee as His child, load thee with His most paternal kindness, enrich thee with His most precious gifts. The yoke of the Lord appears heavy and insupportable only to those who drag it with weariness : for it is light and pleasant to those who carry it willingly. Begin to give thyself wholly to God, and to serve Him as all the saints served Him, and soon thou wilt comprehend how good it is to belong to Him and to love Him ! thou wilt behold the munificence wherewith He rewards His friends even in this life ; and at the hour of thy death, at the moment thou art about to receive the crown of eternal glory thou wilt exclaim with many saints, in the abundance of celestial consolations wherewith He will overflow thy soul : " No, I should never have thought it was so sweet to die."

MEDITATION VI.

ON THREE EXCELLENT LESSONS GIVEN TO US BY
JESUS CHRIST IN THE INSTITUTION OF THE EU-
CHARIST.

FIRST SUBJECT.

WHEN our Divine Master had instituted the Sacra-
ment of the adorable Eucharist, He addressed this
formal recommendation to His Apostles, and said to
them, " This do in remembrance of Me."

1. By those words JESUS taught us, that in ordaining
this Sacrament, His intention was to institute a
memorial of His sufferings and death ; and that con-
sequently every time we receive it, it was His desire
that we should transport ourselves in spirit to Calvary
where His blood was shed for us, and flowed in tor-
rents from all His veins. It was as though He had
said to each of us separately, " My friend, I became
man for thee ; for thy salvation I sacrificed My glory,
My repose, My very life ; what I demand from thee
in return is, that thou keep in memory what I did and
suffered for thee ; that thou often meditate on My
Passion, above all, when thou disposest thyself to re-
ceive Me in the Communion. Such is My last will.
If thou fulfil it faithfully, thou wilt be agreeable to
Me, and I will load thee with numberless mercies."

2. Hast thou hitherto obeyed that express will of
the SAVIOUR ? Hast thou, in communicating, filled
thy soul with the memory of the death of JESUS
CHRIST, and of that cruel night when He was de-
livered up to His enemies ? Hast thou ever once

thought of it as thou shouldest ? How, then, has GOD, so kind and merciful, given up His life to snatch thy soul from hell, and hast thou never perchance reflected for half an hour upon the dreadful torments He endured for thee ? He gives thee His Body to be the nourishment of thy soul, and thou hast perchance never meditated on all that it cost Him to give thee a proof so dazzling of His love ! Hast thou indeed a heart incapable of all gratitude ? Art thou more insensible than brutes to the good thou hast received ?

3. Oh, realise a deep grief in thy soul for a conduct so full of ingratitude, and henceforth, every time thou approachest the holy table, be faithful to meditate on the sufferings and passion of our Divine SAVIOUR, and to thank Him for the great blessing of our redemption. By that means thou wilt fulfil the desire of thy good Master ; thou wilt console His heart, in showing Him that thou forgettest not His gifts ; thou wilt bring thy soul into a disposition to receive Him with benefit, and thou wilt lay up great treasures in heaven.

Colloquy.—I adore Thee, O JESUS, I recognise Thee for my SAVIOUR and my GOD, and I firmly believe that Thou art the same Who, in Thy mortal life didst consent to be betrayed, scourged, crucified, and sacrificed for me. I venerate in this Sacrament the eternal memorial of Thy sacred passion and death. Fulfil my prayer, O GOD, and excite in my soul whenever she has the happiness to receive Thy Body and Blood in the holy Communion, loving and affectionate sentiments of Thy sufferings, so that, being touched and penetrated, I may spend myself in acts of gratitude and love for that immensity of love which led Thee to

take so many evils upon Thyself which I had myself deserved. I love Thee, O God, who diedst to procure eternal salvation for me ; I will render to Thee love for love, and will thank thee unceasingly for the blessing of my redemption ; I will bless Thee and give Thee thanks for Thy pure love, because of that most precious life Thou didst sacrifice for me on Calvary. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

In the Eucharist, our LORD JESUS CHRIST gives Himself to us wholly and without the least reserve. He gives Himself solely in love, and to be the support of our souls, our strength and consolation in this valley of tears.

1. In giving Himself thus wholly to thee, this good Master willed to teach thee that it was just that on thy part thou shouldest give thyself wholly to Him. Besides, has He not claims to thy love ? He left heaven and the company of angels for thee ; He became mortal man and passible for thee ; He worked for the space of thirty-three years, and suffered all kinds of wrongs, contempt, torments, and persecutions for thee ; He shed His blood and gave His life for thee ; and He would still suffer and die were it necessary to thy salvation. Moreover, He is to thee the most loving of fathers, the most faithful of friends, the most gentle of masters, He loves thee with all His heart, and conjures thee to render Him love for His love, to attach thyself to Him alone, and not to seek in the affection of creatures the tranquillity, happiness, and peace which thou canst only find in Him. Finally He gives thee

His Divine flesh for food ; so that although GOD, He can give thee no more, nor prove His love to thee more efficaciously. What hast thou done to correspond to so much love ? Alas ! thou hast often and for a long time refused to serve Him ; but thou hast often and for a long time despised, insulted, and forgotten Him. And when touched by His grace, thou didst return to Him, thou hast given Him so little of thyself that thou hast not blushed to divide thy heart between Him and creatures. Thou hast given one part of it to the world, by loving its vanities ; one part to the devil, by thy adherence to his evil instigations ; one part to thy senses, by following thy unruly inclinations ; and scarcely hast thou kept one reserved corner of that heart for GOD, Who is nevertheless its LORD and Master, and Who created it for Himself alone.

2. Oh, let it be thus no longer. Show thyself grateful, and firmly resolve to give thyself wholly to Him Who has so loved thee. Understand well, that it is impossible for thee to serve two masters ; and that thou must absolutely have courage to detach thyself from every thing which, out of GOD, assumes an empire over thy heart. At this price, JESUS CHRIST, when He vouchsafes to descend into thy soul in the Communion, finding there no longer a rival, will establish there His reign, will take up there His abode, will embellish it by His grace, and will enrich it with every sort of virtue.

Colloquy.—Incarnate Word of the eternal FATHER,
I know that in communicating I receive Thy blessed Body and Blood ; Thou art infinite in all excellence,

and all perfect in Thy sacred humanity. Thou givest Thyself wholly to me, and that without the least reserve: be Thy great goodness praised in all places and in all ages! I dedicate myself entirely to Thee; I will be henceforth wholly Thine. I will devote my intellect to meditate frequently on Thy sublime perfections and continual benefits. I will devote my heart to express a thousand sentiments of love, by which to unite myself to Thee, Who art the GOD of all good. I will use my liberty, and give up my whole being to serve Thee, to please Thee, and to obey Thy commandments. Thou alone hast created me; Thou alone hast hitherto preserved me; Thou alone, therefore, shouldst have dominion over me. Yes, O good JESUS, I will have Thee alone for my Master and Father! I consecrate to Thee my soul and my body; reign in me through the abundance of Thy graces, that they may help me to be Thy faithful servant; and give me a fidelity in Thy service which may never fail, and which may lead me to final perseverance in Thy love. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

When we take bodily nourishment, we assimilate this nourishment to ourselves by means of digestion, and it changes into our own substance. But it is not so with the spiritual food which we give to our soul in the holy Communion. We change not JESUS CHRIST into ourselves; but, by a miracle worthy of God, JESUS CHRIST changes us into Himself, so that we become one with Him.

1. By this wonderful and real transformation of our-

selves into JESUS CHRIST, which is the work of Communion, this Divine Master willed to give us a third lesson of the highest importance. His object in binding us to Himself in so intimate a manner was to teach us, that if Communion renders us one with Himself, we ought, as far as in us lies, to become like to Him in all things. Consequently, we should be meek and humble like Him ; modest and reserved, patient and obedient, chaste and charitable, as He was. We should, like Him, love poverty, flee from honours, despise the world and all its vanities, consecrate our whole being to the glory of GOD, and, if need be, die like Him in the arms of the Cross.

2. What is the fruit which thou hast derived from the many Communions thou hast partaken of during ten, twenty, thirty years, it may be ? What change has been observable in thy conduct ? Art thou following JESUS CHRIST in sanctity ? Alas ! thy heart remains as uncharitable, thy mind as full of love of the world, thy tongue as much given to censure and slander, all thy senses and passions as unmortified as ever. Those who wear musk about their persons, smell of musk. How is it, then, that, having received within thyself so often thy Divine SAVIOUR, Who is as the sweet perfume of the heavenly court, thou exhalest nought around thee, save the ill savour of imperfection, and even of vice ? Oh, let it be so no longer ! Act so that it may be known by thy conduct that JESUS CHRIST has become one with thee in the Sacrament of His love. Shed around thee the sweet odour of good example ; carefully avoid whatever might displease the LORD, and cause thy neighbour to offend ;

shun every useless word, every voluntary fault, however slight ; give thyself to prayer, maintaining thyself in continual recollection ; and live so holily, that others may perceive in thee some features of resemblance to thy Divine Pattern.

Colloquy.—O God, full of goodness, Who dost vouchsafe to come and dwell in me in Holy Communion, shed into my soul all the virtues of Thy Divine Heart, that I may become as nearly as possible like unto Thee ! Shed on me the precious odour of Thy deep humility, of Thy tender charity, of Thy magnanimous patience, that my heart may cleave with affection to these lovely virtues, and practise them. Give me the spirit of prayer, the love of silence, and grace ever to flee from the world. Create in me a great hunger for Thy Divine Word, that I may learn to know Thee and love Thee more and more each day. Let me be ever united to Thee, O blessed JESUS, and never separated from Thee. May I lose my life rather than lose Thy grace ; and do Thou watch over me amid the dangers which surround me, so that I may happily arrive at the glory of heaven, where I shall love Thee without any fear of being ever separated from Thee. Amen.

REFUTATION OF DIVERS PRETEXTS ALLEGED BY THOSE WHO REFUSE TO COMMUNICATE.¹

First Pretext.—If I seldom communicate, it is that I fear communicating unworthily. *Reply.* Fear is

¹ This refutation will take the place of Resolutions for the Sixth Meditation.

good, but love is better still. We should not go to the marriage-feast trembling, but smiling. The Son of God wills not to inspire terror, but to be loved and desired. If thou fearest to approach this table, fearest thou not more to remain away therefrom, since the Son of God has declared, that even those whose excuses appear reasonable, shall never have the privilege of eating His Supper?

Second Pretext.—It seems to me very difficult to communicate both often and worthily; there is, methinks, a peril of familiarity with God. *Reply.* We despise men in proportion as we know them better, because we discover those faults in them which absence and estrangement had concealed from us; but the nearer we draw to God, the more we love Him, because we for ever discover new perfections in Him. What a blasphemy it is to say that the converse of men with God serves only to render them more wicked, and that in order to be holy one must be estranged from Him! Can a perfect act of religion be contrary to the reverence due to this Sacrament? When do we bring forth acts of faith, hope, and charity, if not when we communicate? Can the Church command or desire what is evil? But she commanded in former times that one should communicate daily; and to say the least, she insinuates it and recommends it now.¹

Third Pretext.—I dare not communicate, because I feel no devotion in communicating. *Reply.* There is a difference between devotion and the feeling of devotion. We may have much devotion, though we feel it

¹ As in the Proper Prefaces “for Christmas and *seven day after*,” &c.

not. Sensible devotion is not the surest, and it is liable to many delusions. Besides, it does not always depend upon ourselves; GOD gives it to whom He pleases. If it were necessary to have it, those who have it not on Easter-day ought not to communicate, and those who never have it at all would never communicate. We must therefore humble ourselves when we do not feel it, and not withdraw ourselves. True devotion for that Divine Sacrament consists in approaching it with humility, confidence, and love; in desiring to honour our LORD, to unite ourselves to Him, to make Him reign in our hearts, and to receive life from Him. If sensible devotion were necessary to communicate worthily, the way to have it would be to communicate often, because the effect of this Sacrament is to increase charity, and to produce a spiritual satisfaction in the soul which increases its desire thereof. It is not true that the more seldom thou communicatest, the less thou desirest to communicate; and on the other hand, that the oftener thou eatest that heavenly bread, the more thou desirest to eat it: wherefore, then, dost thou communicate so rarely?

Fourth Pretext.—I am unworthy to communicate, because I sin continually. *Reply.* If thou delay to communicate until thou cease to sin, thou wilt never communicate. Thou art weak, languishing, diseased; wherefore thou shouldst the oftener bring to thee thy Physician to heal thee: thou must take good nourishment to strengthen thyself. Canst thou correct thy faults without grace? and whence is grace derived but from that Sacrament which is its source? Did not the Son of GOD reply to the Pharisees who were scandal-

ised at seeing Him eat with sinners, that He was not come to the whole, but to the sick? Knowest thou not what the Church teaches, that this Sacrament is food and medicine for the sick? Thou must not then keep away from Him because thou art imperfect; on the contrary, thy imperfections constrain thee to come to it, to help thee to get rid of them.

If anything prevents thee from communicating, the hindrance must proceed either from the nature of the Sacrament, or from the nature of man, or from the condition of the sinner. It is not from the nature of the Sacrament; because it was ordained under the form of bread, which is made to be eaten, and that daily. It is not from the nature of man; else the angels alone should communicate. It is not from the condition of the sinner; because all men sin, and for sinners alone did the Son of God come into the world. Provided, then, thou hast confessed thy sins, and hatest them with thy whole heart, and hast formed a real resolution to commit them no more, nothing should hinder thee from approaching that holy table.

Fifth Pretext.—I am very imperfect; and great sanctity is required to communicate. *Reply.* If by this thou meanest a sanctity equal to His Who gives it, the Blessed Virgin herself was never worthy to communicate. If thou meanest that thou must have a purity free from every fault, the Apostles were unworthy of it, inasmuch as they had imperfections; and, still more, the first Christians, who yet communicated every day. If thou understandest by this purity a necessary disposition of heart, the Church tells us that it consists in having no great known sin upon the conscience

which we have not first got rid of. For perfection she requires that we purify ourselves even from the smallest sins, and that we be always resolved to correct ourselves of our faults. What, then, prevents thee from communicating? When wilt thou be without fault or imperfection? Is it not this Sacrament which sanctifies us, and heals our infirmities? Is it not this bread which lessens the attraction of small temptations, and restrains us from consenting to great ones? S. Bernard teaches us this.

Never persuade thyself, O devout soul, that the Son of God requires as a preparation for a Sacrament that which is the fruit, the effect, and the end of the Sacrament; just as it is not required as a preparation for taking medicine that a man be healthy, inasmuch as health is the result of the medicine. But this great holiness and purity of soul is the effect and end of this Sacrament. This food it is which allays the ardour of concupiscence, which moderates the passions, and preserves us from mortal sin. It is therefore most unreasonable to expect that to be thus should be a necessary preparation for receiving this Sacrament. Alas! who would communicate, even at Easter, if this holiness were necessary?

Several other Pretexts.—I would often communicate, but I fear to commit a sacrilege. *Reply.* We desire not to commit a sacrilege, when we fear to commit one; and we never commit it, if we desire not to commit it. *I fear to communicate merely from custom.* *Reply.* The custom of doing what is good is excellent. Should we abstain from daily Divine service for fear of being present there from custom, or from

praying to God each day privately, lest we say our prayers from custom? *I do not become better for the Sacrament.* *Reply.* Dost thou, then, frequently commit great sins? If thou committest not such, how canst thou say thou art not the better for Communion? Is not the effect of this Sacrament to preserve us from great sin? Who fall most, they who communicate often, or they who communicate rarely?

Oh, deception of Satan! he persuaded our first parents to eat of the fruit of death in the hope of life, and now he turns aside Christians from eating of the fruit of life through the fear of death. Thou sayest thou communicatest not often, because thou art not worthy; then thou never wilt communicate, because thou wilt never be worthy. Is there a better disposition for receiving the Sacrament than to judge oneself unworthy? Dost thou not acknowledge it at the foot of the altar before receiving it? Own the truth; it is not the feeling of thy unworthiness which hinders thee from often communicating, but thy attachment to some sin which thou wilt neither confess to thyself nor correct thyself of.

Oh, terrible threat which the Son of God makes to those who excuse themselves! He says, "They shall never eat of My supper." The time will come when thou wilt seek to enter into the banqueting-room; but it will be shut against thee. Thou wilt then seek to communicate, and wilt no longer be able. The King, offended by thy refusal, will send His army, which will put thee to death, and burn up thy city. Loss of goods, sickness, and death even, are often the punishments of our slightings of this divine Sacrament, and chiefly of our refusal to receive it.

ELEVATION OF THE HEART TO JESUS TO ENCOURAGE
ONESELF TO COMMUNICATE FREQUENTLY WITH CON-
FIDENCE.

O JESUS, my SAVIOUR! what cause have I to be afraid of Thee, and to distrust Thy love? Hast Thou ever ill-treated a sinner who has betaken himself to Thee? Wast Thou not well pleased to eat and drink with sinners, to convert them unto Thyself? Did not the scribes and Pharisees impute it to Thee as a crime? Wherefore, then, should their murmurs trouble me, when Thou wert graciously pleased to protect them, saying, "that it was to seek them Thou camest into the world?" I confess that I am a sinner, but would be so no more: and therefore I draw near to Thy holy table. To whom should a sick man betake himself if not to his physician? Whither should I go to derive grace but to the fountain of all grace?

I have no sensible devotion; but I know that it is a favour I deserve not, which Thou bestowest on whom Thou pleasest, and which, moreover, renders us not more worthy in Thine eyes. I had rather communicate with the sense of my unworthiness than with feelings of self-esteem and vanity. Was there ever so great pride as to think oneself worthy to receive the Body of CHRIST? Let others avail themselves of their long and extraordinary preparations; for me I will rest only in humility and obedience. When I look at my own unworthiness, I say I must keep away from the holy table; but when I hear Thee say, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you," I must needs live, I must needs communicate. Oh, then, my JESUS, the

thought of receiving Thee shall no longer terrify me : and however poor and destitute I be, I will draw near to Thee with confidence, because I know Thy infinite goodness, and that Thou art willing to do me good, to heal me of all my spiritual diseases, to enrich me with Thy gifts, and to kindle me with the Fire of Thy holy love. Receive me in Thy mercy, forgive me the sins of which I have been guilty, and which I knew not ; and grant me the grace to receive Thee always in the Eucharist with deep reverence, unlimited confidence, and perfect charity. Amen.

MEDITATION VII.

JESUS WITHDRAWS TO THE MOUNT OF OLIVES TO PRAY.

FIRST SUBJECT.

OUR divine SAVIOUR was wont, after the fatigues of the day, to retire at evening into some solitary place, where He might more tranquilly give Himself up to prayer. However multiplied might be His labours of preaching, He never omitted this holy exercise. He would not even dispense with it on the last night of His life ; for immediately after the institution of the Eucharist, He went out from the supper-room, and accompanied by His Apostles, proceeded towards the Mount of Olives, and retired into the garden of Gethsemane to pray, although He well knew the peril to which He thus exposed Himself. Indeed He knew that in this garden His Passion should begin, and that

His treacherous Apostle would come thither at the head of a troop of armed men to seize His Person, and to give Him up to those who had planned His death.

1. This great example of faithfulness to prayer, which JESUS CHRIST left to us in this record, is a striking condemnation of the coldness wherewith thou fulfillest that exercise which He so often urged upon us in His Gospel. Prayer is the soul of the spiritual life, and he who neglects it will never make great progress towards perfection : too happy he if such neglect become not the cause of his damnation. Prayer is the key which opens to us in this life the treasures of the gifts and mercies of the LORD, and which after death will open to us the gates of Paradise. Prayer raises our souls to GOD, penetrates even to His heart, gives to us great availment with Him, and obtains from Him all we ask. Prayer provides for all our necessities, and enriches our poverty : it strengthens us in our weakness, comforts us in our troubles, and furnishes us with mighty weapons against all the enemies of our salvation. And yet with all these benefits which prayer possesses, in how much esteem dost thou hold it ? It may be thou devotest not to it one quarter of an hour out of the many leisure hours thou spendest in frivolities ! or if thou do bestow any time therein, yet it is with so much coldness and indifference, that thou derivest little or no benefit from it. Nevertheless would to heaven thou hadst persevered in it ! But in a thousand circumstances, or on the slightest pretext, for the least indisposition or increase of work, thou neglectest it unscrupulously, and even forsakest it entirely for whole months.

2. What marvel if, after such great neglect, thou feelest thyself so weak against temptation, so wearied of devotion, so lukewarm in the service of GOD! Can a man who refuses to eat be in good health? So, likewise, can a soul which refuses to pray, or prays only as a matter of obligation, maintain that interior life which prayer only gives, and which was that of JESUS CHRIST, of the Blessed Virgin, and of all the saints? Be, then, henceforth more constant to thy prayers: and on the days when thou hast a greater increase of business, so order thy time that thou be never reduced to the necessity of omitting them. When thou art in any grief, sorrow, weariness, or dryness, do not for that reason omit it, because it is just then that thou shouldest betake thyself to GOD with more earnestness, to obtain from Him the consolation and grace thou needest so much.

Colloquy.—My GOD, grant me the gift of prayer, that I may know how to pray with fervour, and with confidence ask Thee frequently for the favours which are needful to me. I am ashamed of my past negligence, and of having so easily and frequently omitted to pray to Thee, and to fulfil my other exercises of devotion. Yet I felt the great need I had of Thy help, and that should have led me to ask it of Thee with more fervour. But, alas, I suffered myself to be overcome by idleness and aversion, and forsook prayer. O good and bountiful GOD, Thou Who abundantly succourest all those who humble themselves and supplicate Thee, have compassion on me, and forgive my misery! I purpose for the future to do all which depends on myself, and to give due time to prayer,

and to omit nothing to overcome disgust, and to rise above the difficulties which would impede my perseverance in this holy exercise. I ask Thee yet again, O my God, and beseech Thee, grant me the gift of meditation and the spirit of prayer, and then shall I labour successfully to become worthy to be Thy child. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Having reached the entrance of the garden of Gethsemane, JESUS left His other Apostles in the background, and took with Him three only (who were always, as it would seem, His most confidential friends), S. Peter, S. James, and S. John, and withdrew with them to the most retired spot in that garden.

1. That withdrawal of JESUS CHRIST with three only of His Apostles, contains a lesson which thou shouldst not fail to profit by. It teaches thee to confide the secret of thy prayers, good deeds, and temptations, to but few, and to those alone most worthy of such confidence. If thou exposest to the whole world that which passes within thee, and the good thou doest, thou runnest the risk of acting through guilty vanity, and of losing thy reward. Fear not that thy good works be not witnessed ; there is One in Whose sight they are not lost, and of Him alone thou must desire them to be known, because He will not leave them unrewarded. The more thou conceallest them from the eyes of others, the more they will be precious in His eyes. Ask thyself if thou hast always so done ; examine whether in thine actions thou hast not sought

the regard of man more than that of GOD ; and if thy conscience accuse thee in this, ask forgiveness from the LORD, and resolve henceforth to do better.

2. Observe the time and place which JESUS chose for His prayer. He prayed during the night—the time when prayer meets with least impediment of various kinds. He likewise chose a solitary garden, situated in the midst of hills planted with olive-trees, separated from the town, and removed from all noise. He thus teaches thee that, when thou wouldest pray, thou shouldst withdraw thyself from tumult, and fly from all that might distract thy soul. In the isolation of retirement thy prayer will be more fervent, more reverent, and thy converse with GOD more intimate. On the contrary if thou remain in the midst of men, it will be very difficult for thee not to be distracted by their speech and actions. Therefore, when thou wouldest pray, withdraw thyself either into thy chamber, or into a church,¹ as often as is possible ; and there, alone with GOD, open to Him thy soul, show Him thy misery and thy wants, and calmly wait till He shed upon thee the light of His SPIRIT and the abundance of His graces.

3. What I advise thee above all is, never to begin thy prayer without striving to be deeply penetrated with the reverence thou owest to the presence of GOD. Remember the greatness of Him with Whom thou hast the honour to converse, and put forth all thy

¹ It is very much to be desired that the practice of praying in churches, while there is no service going on, should be restored among us. To the poor, who have no privacy, open churches ought to be a very great boon.—ED.

endeavours to reject the voluntary distractions and wanderings of mind which might displease Him. Without this continual attention of thy imagination, thy prayers might be offensive to the LORD, and would bring thee forth no fruit. Now what I say here of mental prayer, I say equally respecting all thy vocal prayers. Never repeat any from habit, and with thy lips merely, without thinking of what thou repeatest: else thou wouldest become guilty before GOD, and instead of receiving His graces, wouldest draw down His indignation.

Colloquy.—O LORD, O my FATHER, when I reflect on all the sins I have committed in my prayers ever since I have been in the world, I admire Thy great goodness, and Thy patience in bearing with me. How many times, alas, have I not dared to appear before Thee with a thousandfold less reverence than that wherewith I should have appeared before a great one of the earth! and nevertheless, O my GOD! I know that when I pray it is to Thee I speak; to Thee, Who art the sovereign LORD of angels and of men, and in Whose eyes all creatures are as though they existed not. O my GOD, have compassion upon me and enlighten my mind, that I may know Thy perfections, and Thine infinite greatness! Impress upon my soul a salutary fear of Thy holy presence, in order that this fear may never forsake me when I present myself before Thee to pray. Ah, if I knew Thee as Thou art worthy to be known, and to the utmost extent of the strength of my poor weak nature, with what reverence should I not maintain myself before Thee while I pray! with what care should I not put away distractions and

wanderings of mind from me, and the many other faults of which I have rendered myself guilty hitherto in my exercises of devotion ! Forgive me, LORD, for all these failings of my past life ; I repent with my whole heart, and I resolve through Thy grace never more to fall into them. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Scarcely was our LORD alone in the garden of Gethsemane, with His three favoured Apostles, than He permitted His heart to be assailed by amazement, heaviness, and sorrow, and torn by a thousand torments. Then He said unto Peter, James, and John, " My soul is sorrowful even unto death."

1. Knowest thou what thus afflicted our Divine SAVIOUR, Him Who is the joy and gladness of Paradise ? knowest thou what thus rendered Him sorrowful unto death ? Three things were the principal causes, First, the foresight of His torments, which were to be so long, so terrible, and so multiplied. Secondly, the sight of our sins, whose enormous weight He bore ; whose number, malice, and gravity He clearly discerned. Thirdly, and lastly, the sight of our hardness of heart, for He foreknew that the greater number of Christians would be ungrateful towards Him, and that there would be few who would compassionate the sorrows of His Passion, and apply them to their own salvation.

2. Beholding the griefs and afflictions which are weighing down the soul of thy SAVIOUR and thy GOD, do thou excite within thyself a deep feeling of grief, and recollect that it is thou, even thyself, who by the

multitude of thy iniquities hast caused Him such cruel sufferings. What hatred, then, oughtest thou to feel for the many sins thou hast unceasingly committed since thy first use of reason! Oh, weep for them, and ask forgiveness with tears, and resolve rather to die than to commit them any more.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, bowed beneath the load of grief and affliction which my sins caused Thee, I hate them all, because they are infinitely displeasing to Thee! I hate and abhor them; I repent with my whole soul of having committed them. I repent, O my GOD, not because they merit hell, but solely for the love of Thee! I would I might feel a greater and deeper contrition; and with that intention I beseech Thee to make me comprehend the supreme evil and horrible ugliness of sin. Give me the grace to flee from it more than from all other evils, and suffer not that for an earthly cause I should be unhappy enough any more to displease Thee. I would rather die in Thy favour, than live as Thine enemy. O JESUS, suffer me not to be so wretched as to be separated from Thee by sin! and inasmuch as I hope Thou hast forgiven me all those of my past life, set the seal to Thy mercy by granting me the precious gift of final perseverance in Thy love. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON MENTAL PRAYER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Prayer being, as it were, the soul of the spiritual life, I will put before thee some considerations which

will serve to prove to thee its necessity, and which will induce thee to become faithful thereto. What is prayer? It is a heavenly torch which lights us in the midst of the darkness which sin has shed around us, and which guides our steps securely towards a blessed eternity. The truths of faith are spiritual things, which we see not with the eyes of the flesh, but only with those of the soul. Now it is by prayer that the soul may grasp, comprehend, and enjoy them; so that if thou refuse to give thyself up to this precious exercise thou wilt be for ever groping darkly in the path of salvation, at the risk of losing thyself for ever. Moreover, without prayer, thou wilt not see what is passing within thee, thou wilt perceive neither thy sins nor thy imperfections; and not only thou wilt not correct thyself of them, but thou wilt scarcely think of them. Neither without prayer wilt thou perceive the dangers which on all sides surround thee; but thou wilt fall headlong into the snares which hell has laid for thee, and wilt be miserably damned. Believe it, there is no exaggeration in this, and daily experience proves the truth of what I advance; on the contrary, if thou art constant in praying regularly, thou wilt be enlightened by the practice. In it thou wilt learn to know God and all thy duties; also to know whatever in thee is displeasing to God and offensive to man; and, lastly, thou wilt draw from it a wonderful strength in the avoidance of sin, in the overcoming of thy imperfections, and in the advancement by rapid strides in the path of virtue.

2. All the saints have made prayer their delight, and have recommended the practice most urgently. They

have all warned us that vocal prayers become almost useless when they proceed not from mental prayer. One often repeated these remarkable words : "He who prays not mentally, will never pray recollectedly, or with attention, humility, or confidence ; and consequently he will hardly obtain the graces he is in need of to withstand the temptations of hell, and to practise holiness." "Yes," added she, "a Christian who entirely neglects mental prayer, no longer needs that devils should cast him into hell, for he plunges into it of his own accord." Hear also upon this subject the words of another : "Never shall we attain to great perfection, if we pray not much mentally." "Without mental prayer," says S. John of the Cross, "I should have been miserably lost ; but GOD gave me grace to comprehend all its benefits, and I gave myself up to it with ardour. It sustained me in my conflicts and troubles, nourished me with the sweet milk of grace, and to it I owe that I have renounced the world and all I possessed." Let us add, that to it likewise he owes the happiness of now sitting on a throne of glory in the abode of the blessed.

3. Wherefore has GOD placed thee on this earth ? It was, thou knowest, in order that thou mightest learn to know and love Him, and thus to draw down the mercy of one day going to Him, to behold and possess Him in Paradise. Now, I ask thee, where doth one learn to know and love GOD, if it be not in prayer ? It is there that the soul comprehends how gracious GOD is, and how ardent is the love which He bears to us ! It is there that she is wrapt in His infinite perfections ; that she becomes filled with hea-

venly thoughts; that she is stript of every earthly affection, and inflamed with the desire to be sanctified; and, finally, that she takes the generous resolution to surrender herself up wholly to God. Persevere, then, in prayer, and leave it not, how irksome soever it may appear to thee. Remember that it was prayer which inspired the saints with that spirit of self-sacrifice which thou admirrest in them; remember that it bore them to heaven, and will bear thee thither likewise, if thou remain faithful to it.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Rightly to perform mental prayer, and to render it profitable to thy soul, thou shouldst determine beforehand the intention wherewith thou prayest. (1.) Pray with the intention of uniting thyself more closely to God. Now, we are united to God not so much by excellent thoughts, as by the affections which proceed from the depth of the heart. Therefore, in the course of thy prayer, pause not for consideration, beyond what is needful for the kindling of devotion in thy soul; but multiply therein holy affections, and be not wearied in making frequent acts of adoration, humility, confidence, self-renunciation, resignation, and above all love of God and contrition for thy sins. The oftener thou repeatest these several acts, the more thou shalt advance in the trust and in love of thy God. (2.) Thou must pray, in order to obtain from the LORD the needful grace to avoid sin, and to take means to arrive at perfection. Consequently, apply thyself to add to thy holy affections continual prayers, in order to unfold to God thy necessities, and

to ask help from Him. Ask, ask unceasingly ; therein wholly consists prayer.

2. But there is one thing which thou must above all else ask carefully in thy prayers, viz. final perseverance. Return incessantly to that request ; fear not to weary the LORD by thy reiterated petitions, because thy importunity will rather be pleasing unto Him. Perseverance being a free gift of GOD, it is only by asking it each day that it is obtained daily. Ask it, then, without fainting, and be sure thou shalt receive it.

3. Another grace which thou must likewise ask fervently in thy prayers, is the holy love of GOD. If this love is once in thy heart, thou wilt possess the greatest of all treasures. It will enrich thee with all kinds of virtues, will make the happiness of thy life, will soothe the agonies of death, and will form thy crown for eternity. Ask it, then, always ; allure it to thy soul by the most earnest wishes, and GOD will certainly give it thee. Acts of love are made by saying, "My GOD, I hold Thee dear above all ; I love Thee with my whole heart. Thy glory makes my happiness. Would that the whole world knew and loved Thee ! I will only that which pleaseth Thee. Show what Thou wilt have me to do, for I am ready to do it. Dispose in the way Thou wilt of me, and of all that is mine."

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Seek not in prayer for sensible consolations. When it pleases the LORD to grant them to thee, thank Him, as for a favour of which thou art unworthy, but do not cling to them. The worthiest prayers are not those wherein we experience most spiritual conso-

lations, but those wherein we make most interior acts of holiness. There are many persons who are willing to persevere in prayer so long as they feel inclination and attraction to it ; but if these consolations cease, they forsake it. Be not like to them. And if thou readest in the lives of many saints that their prayers were to them a foretaste of the enjoyments of Heaven, remember that they owed this mercy alone to the constancy wherewith they persevered in prayer, notwithstanding the dryness they experienced in it. One who was a model of the most sublime devotion passed fourteen years in this holy exercise, while yet feeling only repugnancy and weariness in it ! All the saints have more or less experienced this repugnance ; therefore it is not surprising that thou shouldst. Wherefore, whatever dryness thou feelest, be ever faithful to it, and it shall be well with thee. The season of barrenness shall cease, and a day will come when GOD will shed into thy soul the sweet dew of His consolations. Be resolute, then, and persevere.

2. Do not imagine that because thy prayers are full of distractions, they render thee guilty before GOD, and are useless to thee. It is assuredly not thus. Inasmuch as thy mental wanderings are involuntary,—inasmuch as thou mournest for them before GOD, and offerest them to Him in a spirit of penitence, thou mayest rest in peace. GOD knows the clay whereof thou art made, and will have compassion on thee.

3. In concluding thy prayer, excite in thyself the desire to serve and love GOD with renewed ardour, and form a special resolution, such as to correct thyself of some fault, to practise some virtue. But content not

thyself with a vague resolution, as it would be to say, "I will do better to-day than I did yesterday;" but specify clearly what thou hast the intention to do or to avoid. Thus, say to thyself, "I am prone to be fretful in such and such a case; to-day I will watch over myself on that point." "I will mortify my eyes, my tongue, or my will, in such and such a circumstance that I foresee." "I will faithfully fulfil such and such duties that I neglect too much." Renew the same resolution several days successively, until thou hast succeeded in getting rid of such a fault, or in acquiring such a virtue. Endeavour to persevere, implore the help of Heaven at the moment of putting it into execution, and God will do the rest.

MEDITATION VIII.

OF THE PRAYER OF JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE.

FIRST SUBJECT.

THE prayer of our SAVIOUR in the Garden of Olives, being attended with very remarkable circumstances, we shall pass them all in review consecutively, since they all form a subject of instruction of high importance. Let us first place before our eyes the painful condition in which JESUS CHRIST was at His entrance therein. He was sorrowful, and sorrowful even unto death. In such a state we cling to the society of our friends for consolation; we like to speak to them of the sorrows we are enduring, that they may soothe

them by sharing them ; but our Divine Master willed to refuse Himself even that solace. He withdrew a stone's cast from His three privileged Apostles, and going further into the solitude of the garden, He began to pray.

1. Let this conduct of JESUS CHRIST teach thee it is in vain that thou goest forth to seek in the dissipations and pleasures of the world, or even in the converse of thy most intimate and virtuous friends, a remedy to thy evils, and relief to thy sorrows. What, indeed, can the pleasures of the world do to comfort thee? They may, perhaps, divert thee, and make thee forget for a moment thy thoughts of grief; but only to cause them to return with more acuteness and bitterness. What can thy most devoted friends do when thou art in grief or adversity? They will no doubt weep with thee, and suggest to thee motives of patience and resignation ; but it will never be in their power fully to comfort thee. GOD only in these circumstances can shed into thy afflicted soul those solid and wonderful consolations of which He is the source and which we can only find in Him. It is, therefore, to Him alone that thou must have recourse in prayer. Go and cast thyself at His feet ; and be fully assured that one quarter of an hour of resigned prayer made in His holy presence, will be of a thousand times more avail to calm the agony of thy breast, than a whole day passed in weeping in the society of thy friends.

2. Consider JESUS at the moment when He began His prayer, and observe the posture He chose wherein to pray. He not only knelt, but He prostrated Himself with His face to the ground. He remained long

in that attitude, breathing deep sighs, shedding abundant tears, maintaining Himself in abjection before the majesty of His Heavenly FATHER, and leaving to us thereby a wonderful example of the deep reverence and the humility both outward and inward, which we ought to preserve in the presence of GOD, when we have the privilege of speaking to Him, and of addressing to Him our prayers and supplications.

3. Is it thus thou dost when thou prayest? Is it thus thou shovest to GOD the reverence wherewith His awful Presence inspires thee? Alas! thou art far from so doing; for rather with how little reverence presumest thou to appear before the LORD! Scarcely thou bendest the knee before Him; or else thou dost it with such carelessness, that it is easy to see thou hast no faith, or at most but a dying faith. Thou lougest unnecessarily on whatever is within reach; thou turnest thy head to the right and left: thou yieldest to weariness, and even to sleep; thou scarcely knowest the words thou addressest to GOD: so that if thou wast conversing with one of thine equals, thou wouldst maintain a more becoming demeanour, and wouldst watch over thyself far more, that nothing should escape thee which might offend the person to whom thou speakest.

4. Mourn, then for this coldness and indifference which have hitherto affected thy vocal and mental prayers. Resolve to pray henceforth with more reverence, humility, and attention; and to animate thyself bear often in mind the reverential attention and deep humility wherewith JESUS CHRIST prayed. If He, the SON of GOD, prostrated Himself on the earth to

pray, as though He deserved not to see the light of heaven, is it not reasonable that thou, a miserable sinner, who hast so often deserved hell, shouldst fulfil this duty towards Him with every imaginable feeling of reverence and adoration for that God most holy to whom thou exposest thy miseries and wants?

Colloquy.—O God, O my FATHER Who art in heaven, I ask pardon of Thee for all the irreverences and other sins which I have committed in the presence of Thy Almighty Majesty at the time of my prayers and holy exercises. I mourn for them, and repent with my whole heart, because I know they have displeased Thee, Who art supremely great and worthy of all honour. I offer Thee the homage and reverence wherewith JESUS CHRIST prayed to Thee in the Garden of Olives; and by the merits of this His homage, I beseech Thee to forgive me all the sins of which I have been guilty in praying so unworthily. Vouchsafe, I beseech Thee, to engrave in my soul a profound sense of Thine infinite perfections! so that when I pray in Thy Presence, I may do it in deep humility, and with all the devotion of which I am capable. I unite my prayer to those of my Redemer. I have a firm trust that, for the sake of His, Thou wilt answer mine, and wilt grant me all those graces which I need for the avoidance of sin and for my salvation. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

The prayer of JESUS is the pattern of ours. “ My FATHER, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me, nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done.”¹

¹ S. Matt. xxvi. 39.

1. By this short and beautiful prayer, JESUS teaches thee what confidence should animate thy soul whenever thou drawest near to the throne of GOD to beseech Him to come to thy help. Thou shouldst at that time regard Him as a tender Father, and unhesitatingly believe that, as a Father, He earnestly desires to do thee good, to load thee with His favours, and to console thee in thy sorrows, if He sees that it tends to His glory and to thy salvation.

2. This Divine Master teaches thee what should be thy resignation to the will of GOD when thou askest Him for some favour, whether of a temporal or spiritual kind. Therefore, after thou hast made known to Him thy desires, if it seem to thee that thy wishes are not fulfilled, yet remain calm, and in joy as in affliction, in health as in sickness ; in a word, in all the events of life, whether grievous or happy, submit without murmuring to the good pleasure of the LORD, and yield thyself unreservedly to His love.

3. Consequently, be careful always, before thou begin to pray, to excite within thyself a great trust in the goodness of GOD, as does a good son towards a father, whose tenderness he well knows. This confidence will be infinitely pleasing to the LORD, and will no doubt draw down upon thee His most precious graces. In the second place, before, during, and after thy prayer, exercise the most entire self-abnegation, and submit thyself wholly to the holy and adorable will of GOD, whether He grant or refuse thee what thou askest. As He knows infinitely better than thou what is useful or hurtful to thy soul, He will grant to thee or withhold from thee what thou desirest, accord-

ing as He shall judge right. Let Him, then, do His will; and say to Him from the depth of thy heart, in the words of JESUS CHRIST, "LORD, Thy will, not mine be done."

Colloquy.—Yes, O my GOD, I hope from Thy infinite goodness to receive all which I shall ask of Thee! I trust that Thou wilt graciously hear me, and wilt comfort me in my sorrows and tribulations. I have an unlimited trust in the immensity of Thy love, and in the infinite loving-kindness of Thy heart. Thou art to me a Father, and a Father whose tenderness surpasseth all that any man can comprehend. I am, therefore, well assured that Thou wilt never harshly refuse me the graces which I pray Thee to bestow on me, as often as they may contribute to my eternal salvation; and if thou shouldst sometimes refuse them to me, I will not be disquieted, nor will I be grieved thereat, being well assured that Thou dealest thus with me only for my greater good. For art Thou not infinite wisdom, O GOD? therefore Thou knowest better than I can know what is good for me; and so I yield myself unreservedly to all which Thou shalt be pleased to do for me. I am ready to receive all at Thy hand. Be it that Thou grant me what I ask, or be it Thou refuse, I submit to Thy righteous will. What I desire is, that Thy ever-infinitely wise will be fulfilled in me now and ever, in time and in eternity. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Consider with what devotion, with what feelings of compunction, and with what abundance of tears, our LORD prayed. Consider, likewise, the deep sorrow of

His soul, and the desertion wherein He found Himself. He was separated from His Apostles, who, instead of taking part in His affliction, had fallen into deep sleep. His heavenly FATHER seemed to turn away from His prayer, and not to answer His groanings. His ever-blessed Mother was at a distance from the spot, while His enemies drew near to it. Nevertheless, in the midst of so much anguish, He persevered in prayer; and though knowing well He should not be heard, He repeated several times the same prayer, asking His FATHER that, if possible, the bitter cup of His Passion might pass away from Him.

1. Learn from hence not to forsake prayer when thy heart is dry and arid, and thou feelest no sensible consolation. Reflect, then, that the end of prayer being chiefly to honour GOD, thou shouldst seek therein contrition and sorrow for thy sins rather than thine own spiritual consolation.

2. Learn also that thou shouldst grow neither sad nor discouraged when the LORD sees it not right to answer thee by granting the favour thou askest as speedily as thou wishest. Assuredly, JESUS CHRIST deserved to be heard at His first words of prayer, and yet He received no answer till He had prayed three times. Wherefore shouldst thou refuse to prolong thy prayers and petitions, who art a great sinner? Is it that thou thinkest thyself worthier than thy Divine SAVIOUR? Hast thou the presumption to expect to be heard sooner than He was? No, doubtless.

3. Finally, learn that very often the LORD will not grant thee consolation in prayer, or speedily give thee

a remedy to thy miseries, just because He wills to exercise thy patience, to try thy faith, to show thee thy weakness and thy need of His help, and, lastly, to give the grace of perseverance. Pray, then, always; and notwithstanding the apparent inutility of thy prayers, forsake not to pray: it is prayer which asks, but it is perseverance which obtains.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, I venerate Thy unwearied perseverance in prayer, notwithstanding Thine absolute deprivation of all consolation and support! Thou givest me herein a great example of the perseverance I ought to have in prayer, notwithstanding the disgust, weariness, and dryness which so often come to torment me. I see, O my GOD, that it is not my own pleasure and satisfaction which I should seek, but Thy satisfaction and Thy glory. Thou takest a gracious pleasure in our prayers, and answerest them, though we often pray with a heart cold, arid, and dry. As it is enough for me to please and honour Thee, I purpose to persevere henceforth in prayer, notwithstanding the dryness and desolations which I may find therein. I will continue ever praying, even when I see that I am not answered. And if it pleaseth Thee to defer to vouchsafe to me the graces I ask of Thee, I will still persevere in praying, in order to prove to Thee my submission, and thus to labour for Thy glory. Give me a patience which will endure every trial, and a perseverance in prayer which nothing can discourage. This I pray Thee of Thine infinite mercy. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON VOCAL PRAYER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Having spoken in the resolutions of the preceding Meditation upon the necessity and benefits of mental prayer, I purpose conversing with thee upon prayer in general. The subject is serious, and one of the highest importance, and merits all thy attention. I begin, then, with laying down, as a principle with all orthodox theologians, that prayer is necessary to those who have reached the age of reason, and that without it they cannot be saved.¹ Indeed, we cannot conquer our enemies, avoid sins, and reach heaven, without the help of Divine grace; and this help, in the ordinary ways of Providence, is only obtained by prayer. It is therefore plain, that without prayer there is no salvation. It is true that the LORD, Who knows our weakness and miseries, might grant us the favours which we need without our asking; but He will not. He requires that we have recourse to Him; and in like manner, as He has ordained that we should have no bread but inasmuch as we sow wheat, and no wine but in as far as we plant the vine, so He has willed that we shall receive the graces necessary to salvation by the means of prayer. Therefore pray: ask and ye shall receive; seek and ye shall find. If thou ask nothing, thou wilt receive nothing, and thou

¹ Post baptismum necessaria est homini jugis oratio, ad hoc quod cœlum introeat. (S. Thom. ii. 2. 93, a. 2.)

wilt be eternally lost. On the other hand, if thou pray, thou shalt be saved: all saints, excepting children, become so through prayer only; and the damned are lost only because they prayed not. Had they prayed, they would certainly have been saved. The greatest torment that the lost will suffer in hell will be to know that they might so easily have been saved; because they had but to ask GOD for His grace, and they did not do it.

2. Who could describe all that prayer has of strength and power over the heart of GOD? One must read in the Divine writings the everlasting promises made by GOD to those who pray: "Call unto Me, and I will answer thee;"¹ "Cry unto Me, and I will deliver thee;" "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find;"² "Whatsoever ye shall ask the FATHER in My name, He will give it you."³ The holy books are full of other similar texts, wherein the LORD makes us perceive that He is disposed favourably to answer all our prayers. Pray therefore: for with prayer thou canst do all things, and by it the LORD will give thee the strength thou lackest. How great soever be the fury of devils against thee, whatever strength they may put forth to ruin thee, thou wilt conquer if thou prayest, because prayer is stronger than hell.⁴ Prayer is a buckler which repels every attack, a haven which shelters us from the tempest, a treasure which procures for us every kind of bless-

¹ Jer. xxiii. 3.

² S. Matt. vii. 7.

³ S. John xiv. 14.

⁴ Oratio dæmonibus omnibus prævalet. (S. Bern. Serm. 49, de Modo bene vivendi.)

ing.¹ "Come to Me," cries the **LORD**, "all ye who are contending with your enemies, and weighed down by the burden of your sins. Be not discouraged ; call to Me in prayer, and I will give you the strength to resist, and be your shelter in all your adversities.² Yea, have recourse to Me ; and albeit your consciences are laden with sins, come with confidence ! for I even give you permission, to reason with Me, so to speak, if through the help of My grace I render you not as pure as snow as often as ye will cast yourselves into My arms."³ O thou who readest this, therefore, I repeat to thee once more, pray—pray unceasingly. Prayer appeases God's wrath, Who readily forgives him who prays. It obtains all the mercies we require ; it gives light to the blind, strength to the feeble, and transforms the greatest sinners into saints. Destitute as thou art of every good, ask, and thou shalt be enriched. God is not, like man, niggard of His treasures. On the contrary, when we beseech Him to grant us favours, He gives us always much more than we ask Him for. Men here below, even the richest, even the most pious and liberal, keep their hands closed while distributing their largesses, and generally give less than they are asked for, because their wealth is limited, how abundant soever it may be ; from whence it results that the more they give away, the

¹ Magna armatura precatio, tutela, portus, et thesaurus. (S. Joan. Chrys. in Ps. cxlv.)

² Venite ad me, omnes qui laboratis et onerati estis, et ego reficiam vos. (S. Matt. xi. 28.)

³ Venite et arguite me, dicit Dominus : si fuerint peccata vestra ut coccinum, quasi nix dealbabantur. (Isa. i. 18.)

less they have left to them. But it is not thus with GOD. He sheds His blessings with open hands upon those who ask Him ; and He always grants more than we pray for, because His riches are infinite.¹ The more He gives, the more has He to give. Therefore thy only care should be to pray always, being fully persuaded that by this means all the treasures of heaven will open to thee.

3. What shouldst thou ask of GOD in thy prayers ? First, thou shouldst ask Him for the advancement of His glory, and ask that His Holy Name may be known, reverenced and loved by all men. Consequently, thou shouldst commend to GOD all infidels, in order to obtain for them grace to be enlightened with the light of faith, and to embrace our holy religion. Thou shouldst also pray much for sinners, in order that they may return into themselves and see their own past wanderings, and be converted. Thou shouldst equally pray for the righteous, that they may persevere in the service of GOD, and become more perfect from day to day. In the second place, thou shouldst pray for thyself and for all thy necessities. Before all, thou shouldst ask for all the graces necessary to thy salvation. Thou mayest likewise petition for temporal blessings, but thou oughtest only to ask for them on condition that they may be useful to thy soul ; so that if the LORD refuse them to thee, thou shouldst not therefore be troubled, but think that GOD deals thus because the things thou hast asked for would become detrimental to thy salvation.

¹ Deus dat omnibus affluenter, nec improferat. (S. Jacob. i. 5.)

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. That thy prayers may be good and acceptable to GOD, it is needful that they be accompanied by attention, humility, confidence, resignation, contrition, and perseverance. We will speak individually of these conditions. The first condition of an acceptable prayer is attention. GOD in former times complained of the Jewish people by the mouth of the prophet Isaiah, and He said : "This people honoureth Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me." Thou wouldst justly deserve this reproach if thou contentedst thyself with reciting with thy lips certain forms of prayer which thou findest in books, whilst thou art thinking of something else. It is not the lips which pray, but it is the heart. Be very careful, then, to put away from thee every voluntary distraction of thought whilst thou prayest. Is it not an unworthiness that a man should dare to speak to GOD, and ask favours from Him, and yet not give himself the trouble to attend to what he is saying ? It will be in vain that thou prayest, if thy prayers are not said with attention, for thou wilt not be heard. How wouldst thou that GOD should listen to thee, if thou listenest not to thyself? Nevertheless, the involuntary distractions which proceed from the weakness of our nature need neither trouble nor discourage thee. Be content with humbling thyself before the LORD ; beseech Him to diminish the number by His grace ; and after that maintain thyself in peace, for they render not thy prayers evil.

2. The second condition of an acceptable prayer is

humility. GOD resists the prayers of the proud, and abandons them to their own miseries ; but on the contrary, loves to answer those of His humble servants.¹ Every time, then, that thou prayest, begin by humbling thyself before the LORD. Remember, then, that thou speakest to the sovereign LORD of heaven and earth ; to Him Who is infinitely great, infinitely powerful, infinitely holy. Remember at the same time that thou art dust and ashes, and perhaps even a great sinner.

Thou shouldst, then, in praying, acknowledge thyself unworthy to appear before GOD : sink into nothingness at the sight of thy unworthiness, and cry, "LORD, have pity on me, for I am only a poor sinner." Thou shouldst humbly implore His mercy, ask His help ; and whilst regarding thyself as unworthy to receive His mercies, yet hope for them through His clemency and the merits of JESUS CHRIST. Never has the prayer of the humbled sinner been rejected by GOD. Do we not in fact see in the Gospel that our Divine LORD praised the Canaanite, the Centurion, the Publican ; and that He granted their prayers because they confessed their unworthiness, while He rejected the proud prayer of the Pharisee ?

It was His will thereby to teach thee that the prayer of a heart which humbles itself penetrates even to the heavens, and that GOD never fails to answer it.²

3. The third condition of an acceptable prayer is

¹ Deus superbis resistit, humilibus autem dat gratiam. (S. Jacob. iv. 6.)

² Oratio humiliantis se nubes penetrabit, et non discedit, donec Altissimus aspiciat. (Eccl. xxxv. 17.)

confidence. If thou wilt through prayer obtain the favour of heaven, thou must offer it up unhesitatingly, with a sure confidence of being answered. GOD is exceedingly pleased by our confidence in His mercy, because then we honour Him and exalt His infinite goodness. He Himself assures us by His prophet that He turns His eyes upon those who hope in His goodness, and will deliver them from the death of sin ; and that none of those who have ever put their trust in Him shall be confounded.¹

It was to lead us to this confidence that JESUS CHRIST taught us to call GOD not our Judge, but *our Father* ; because He wills that we should pray to Him with that confidence wherewith a poor or sickly son asks his father for the food or medicine which he is in need of. When the Canaanitish woman saw her daughter possessed with the devil, she had recourse to the SAVIOUR, and drew near to Him, saying, “LORD, have mercy upon me, my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.” And the LORD answered her, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.” She, however, did not lose courage, but renewed her prayer with confidence, “LORD, Thou canst console me ; have mercy upon me !” JESUS replied to her, “It is not meet to take the children’s bread and to cast it unto dogs.” “Truth, LORD,” she answered ; “yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their master’s table.” Then the LORD beholding the great faith of that woman, praised her, and granted her the mercy she asked. Pray therefore with the same con-

¹ Ecce oculi Domini super metuentes eum, et in eis qui spe-rant super misericordia ejus, ut eruat à morte animas eorum.

fidence as that poor mother, and like her thou wilt be heard and answered.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. The fourth condition of an acceptable prayer is resignation. When thou prayest, thou art before God as a criminal who sues for pardon; thou hast no right to require it, because nothing but punishment is due to thee. Nevertheless entreat the LORD to grant it thee, and entertain a firm confidence that it will not be refused thee; but nevertheless resign thyself to the will of the LORD as to the time when He will fulfil thy petition. Murmur not against Him, and upbraid not His mercy, if it seem to thee that thy supplications are rejected. On the contrary, when thou hast made known to Him thy wants, say, "My God, I yield myself up to Thee, do with me what Thou wilt." And be assured that thy humble resignation will be agreeable to the LORD, and will draw down upon thee His most precious benedictions.

2. The fifth condition of an acceptable prayer is contrition of the heart. Whoever thou art, thou hast often offended God, and thy soul has perhaps been long plunged in iniquity. Thou hopest that God has mercifully forgiven thee all thy transgressions; but nevertheless fail not to mourn for them as often as thou prayest. Repeat frequently those blessed words of the poor publican, "LORD, have mercy upon me a sinner." And these repeated acts of contrition will prepare thy soul for an abundant gift of the grace of Heaven.

3. Lastly, the sixth condition of an acceptable

prayer is perseverance. When thou wouldest obtain some favour from GOD, be not contented with asking it of Him once or twice. To require GOD to fulfil our request at once is not to pray, but to insist, as S. Augustine says. And what are we that we should insist upon GOD's obeying our will? The LORD indeed consents to grant us all the favours necessary to our salvation, but He wills that we importune Him, so to speak, by our prayers, and He requires that we persevere in our supplications. Do then as poor beggars do: if they are turned away without receiving the alms they ask, they weary not of coming to beg again; they knock at the door, they become importunate, until they receive somewhat. Thou, when thou art at the door of the LORD, making known to Him thy needs, knock, and return unceasingly to besiege Him; weary not of praying till He help and protect thee. Hope confidently that thou wilt be heard favourably, and then wait with patience the moment which GOD has fore-ordained in His wisdom. It is impossible but that thy perseverance will at length touch the heart of GOD. Above all, yield not to discouragement; for the day wherein thou ceasest to pray, is the day wherein the LORD might have determined to answer thee.

Pray then, and seek for grace continually, if thou wilt work out thy salvation. Let prayer be thy dearest companion, and the exercise of thy whole life. Thou art lost if thou cease to pray. Tell me not that thou knowest not how to pray. For what is it to say, "LORD, help me: LORD, deliver me from sin: give me Thy holy love; give me a blessed death?" Is

there anything easier? If thou doest it not, it is that thou wilt not; and yet without doing it thou canst not be saved.

MEDITATION IX.

THE AGONY OF OUR LORD IN THE GARDEN OF OLIVES,
AND HIS BLOODY SWEAT. AN ANGEL DESCENDS
FROM HEAVEN TO COMFORT HIM.

FIRST SUBJECT.

His prayer ended, JESUS, still weighed down by the same agitation, still sorrowful unto death, returned to His three Apostles; but finding them asleep, in spite of His express injunction to them to watch while waiting for Him,¹ He reproached them gently for sleeping under such circumstances, and desired them again to watch and pray, that they might not enter into temptation.² Then He returned to the end of the garden, and began to pray again. During which time, reflecting, on the one hand, upon the cruel sufferings which He should have to endure before His death; and beholding, on the other, how all the sins of the whole human race had fallen upon Him, how He was overwhelmed with them, how they had become, as it were His own, He was weighed down by so deep an anguish, that He fell into a deathlike agony, and falling with

¹ Sustinete hic et vigilate. . . . Et venit, et invenit eos dormientes. (S. Marc. xiv. 34—37.)

² Sic non potuistis una hora vigilare mecum! Vigilate et orate, ut non intretis in temptationem. (S. Matt. xxvi. 40.)

His face to the earth, He remained in this attitude for a long while, prostrate and senseless.

1. Compassionate with all the affection of which thou art capable, the sufferings of thy Divine SAVIOUR. Behold, He is prostrate on the ground, sorrowful unto death, agonised ; and He has no one to address to Him a single word of consolation and encouragement ! Thy heart would certainly be harder than stone, if such a spectacle could not move it : and thou wouldest greatly need pity if, when thou so often sheddest abundant tears at the recital of imaginary griefs thine eye should remain tearless at the aspect of GOD suffering so cruel an agony for love of thee, and on account of thy sins. Oh, let it not be thus ; and if thou canst not shed sufficient tears worthily to compassionate the sorrows of thy JESUS, at least sympathise with Him, by producing in thy heart a great number of acts of love and contrition for thy past sins.

2. Gather from our LORD's demeanour while in His agony a new source of instruction whereby to profit. Our gracious LORD was given up to the most bitter anguish ; He was alone—forgotten by His Apostles who were sleeping ; deprived even of the consolation which He had a right to expect from His Heavenly FATHER ; and yet He complained not, murmured not against any one : but suffered in silence, and with absolute submission to the will of Heaven. Thereby He taught thee in what manner thou shouldest maintain thyself in sorrow, affliction and sickness, if thou wouldest please GOD. He has taught thee that patience and resignation are the best means of rendering them profitable to thee for heaven.

3. Is it thus thou hast acted hitherto? Alas, thou art inconceivably unmortified and self-indulgent! At the least affliction which befalls thee, or in the slightest sickness, thou requirest the consolations of thy friends, their eager attention and efficacious remedies; and if those remedies do not cure thee as speedily as thou wouldest, if those cares and consolations are not forthcoming, thou becomest dejected, thou complainest and murmurrest! Oh, shame, how little dost thou resemble JESUS in His suffering! Oh, resolve from this day to be more patient in thy sicknesses, more resigned in thy afflictions, and calmer when thou lackest consolation!

Colloquy.—O most gracious JESUS! I offer to Thee all the afflictions Thou didst undergo in the garden of Gethsemane; and through the merits of Thy bitter Passion, I beseech Thee to give me strength to suffer for love of Thee, every trial which it may please Thee to send me. I blush for that slothful self-indulgence which occasions me to fall into an unworthy dejection each time that some calamity befalls me. I blush too for the great over-eagerness with which I go craving from creatures consolation and alleviation in my sorrows. I resolve to suffer henceforth with more calmness, patience, and Christian resignation. Comfort me by Thy grace. Put Divine strength into my heart, that my soul may never yield to disgust for Thy service! that I may never more lose patience, whatever adversity may fall upon me. Make me realise all the happiness and glory there is in suffering for love of Thee; and thenceforth I will cling to the Cross, and suffer calmly after Thy example, all the troubles of

this miserable life. Fulfil my prayer, O merciful JESUS, I beseech Thee. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

The anguish of JESUS in His Passion became more and more heavy every moment. He had permitted a great dread of death to arise in His soul, which became paralysed by fear and terror. It was that nature shrunk from so much suffering, while grace willed to obey GOD, and to accept Passion and Death.¹ He had therefore to sustain a terrible mental conflict, to overcome the reluctance of nature; so that from the violence which our Divine LORD exercised over Himself, there flowed from every part of His Body so abundant a sweat of Blood, that it drenched His clothes, and fell down even to the ground.

1. Ponder, with a lively sentiment of compassion, the greatness of the sufferings of JESUS, which He endured from His tormentors through the whole course of His Passion, the thought alone of which sufferings drew from Him a sweat of Blood; and seeing to what a point He loved thee, promise to love Him evermore, and ask His grace never more to be separated from His love.

2. The sweat of blood was caused by fear of death, and by the burden of our sins, which was so great and heavy, that He must have died on the spot, had He not by a miracle sustained life: yes, by a miracle, in

¹ Some holy Fathers think that JESUS CHRIST had no fear of death or of torments; but the most common opinion is, that He did really feel the terrors of death, and a great reluctance thereto, with the inferior will of His soul.

order to suffer, though He never would perform one to exempt Himself from sufferings. What a condemnation of thy baseness is here, thou who wouldest that the **LORD** should at every moment perform a miracle to relieve thee from suffering and from death!

3. By the example of **JESUS CHRIST**, Who, though shrouded with the infirmities of all mankind, yet overcame all natural terrors, do thou resolutely wage war against thy passions and evil inclinations, and excite within thy soul a firm determination to strive ever vigorously against them to overcome them. Think upon every thing which may be a stumbling-block in thy progress in the path of Christian perfection, and break the fetters which keep thee from belonging wholly to **GOD**. Resist the rebellious emotions of nature; triumph over the flesh to bring it into captivity to the spirit, wert thou to struggle even to the shedding of thy blood, as it is fitting thou shouldst do for Him Who shed His blood for thee. And if at times thy soul dreads all that it must suffer in the service of **GOD**, be not therefore troubled. Thy reluctance is neither an imperfection nor a fault; but it is a natural feeling, which thou must seek to overcome; it will give thee only the more merit. Remember that the **SAVIOUR** Himself shrank from shame and contempt, dreaded bodily pain, feared persecutions, calumnies, accusations, violence, and the fury of His enemies. It is no marvel if the leaf fall when the tree is shaken to the root.¹ Therefore lose not cou-

¹ *Quis non timeat, si timet ille quem omnia timent; si pavet ille cui omne genu curvatur; si ille qui est mors mortis et morsus*

rage ; JESUS overcame His reluctance, and thou wilt overcome thine by His grace ; thou wilt cast it away, and it will be to thee a title the more to the eternal recompense.

4. If JESUS CHRIST, Who was innocence itself, and who was sure of His eternal blessedness, fell into so heavy a sorrow and bitter an anguish in the anticipation of His approaching death, what agony and anguish will be thine, when thou art going to die, in beholding thy soul so destitute of any good thing, so soiled with many sins ! Think seriously of this ; and beseech the LORD to give thee grace so to live, as that thou mayest die with trust in Him, with great peace, and much consolation to thy soul.

Colloquy.—O my Divine SAVIOUR, thou teachest me by Thy example how I ought to struggle against my passions, when they would hurry me away to transgress Thy holy commandments. Hasten to my help when they come to assail me, and sustain me in the midst of the combat. I desire to resist their assaults, to overcome, because Thou commandest it. Thou, O GOD, didst shed Thy precious Blood to vanquish them ; is it not just that I should do likewise for Thy love and for Thy glory ? Is it not very just that to please Thee I should declare continual war against my anger, my sensuality, and my other passions ? It is what I will do henceforth. Help me, O gracious JESUS ! that, like a good soldier, I may mortify my flesh and uproot all my vices. Succour me, because in so violent a struggle I can do nothing inferni, morte propinquante, pertimescit ? (S. Cypr. Serm. de Passione Christi.)

without Thee. I hope in Thee, vouchsafe to come to my aid. I think I have a sincere desire to mortify self in all things during my life, that at the hour of my death I may easily resist my enemies, and leave this world victorious over their efforts. Vouchsafe, O LORD, to grant me Thy most precious grace, so that, notwithstanding the incessant attacks of my spiritual foes, within and without, I may have the happiness of living and dying in Thy love.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Our divine LORD had prayed a long while without receiving any answer from Heaven to His supplications. At last, however, an angel sent by GOD the FATHER came to Him to strengthen Him.

1. Behold the paternal care which GOD takes of those who have recourse to Him with confidence, and the loving providence wherewith He never fails to send them the grace, help, and consolation which they need at the time He judges fit. Learn from thence to discern the ways of the LORD with regard to men, and especially to those who are His elect. It often happens that, either to try them, or to lead them to acts of patience and conformity to His holy will, He appears to refuse to hear their aspirations and prayers. But if, in spite of these apparent refusals, they continue to trust in Him and to pray, He suffers Himself to be moved sooner or later, and grants to their perseverance many more graces and favours than they would have presumed to ask.

2. Do thou hope to obtain the grace and consolation of Heaven in the midst of thy afflictions and sor-

rows, and purpose never to distrust, whatever may befall thee, the goodness and infinite mercy of God.

3. Observe that the holy Gospel tells us not that the angel came down from Heaven to announce to our divine SAVIOUR that GOD would avert the cup of His passion from Him, but solely to strengthen Him and encourage Him to drink it to its dregs. It was to teach us that GOD answers our prayers not always by delivering us from the evils which we dread, but by giving us strength to endure them, which is far more beneficial to us, and to the interests of our eternity. Forget not so important a lesson.

Colloquy.—O Almighty GOD ! I bless the paternal providence whereby Thou aidest Thy faithful servants. Never more will I distrust Thy goodness, but will always place in Thee an unlimited confidence. I will frequently supplicate Thee to grant me all the favours I need ; and when I see that Thy aid is deferred, I will not continue the less to wait upon Thee for all which is necessary to my salvation. I am certain Thou wilt not forsake me, because Thy tenderness has never forsaken any one. If Thou delayest the help we ask, it is always for our good, and to exercise our patience and resignation. Be Thou for ever blessed ! I promise that henceforth I will desire nothing but what Thou willest. I will ever pray to Thee ; I will ever invoke Thy help and succour. But I will likewise always wait patiently till it pleases Thee to answer me : Thy will, not mine be done. What *I* desire is, not that which pleases myself, but that which is Thy good pleasure. Provided I love Thee, I am more than satisfied. Thou knowest better than I what would be

useful to me, and what would hurt me. Whatever favour, then, I ask of Thee, deal with me according to Thy wisdom. I submit beforehand, for love of Thee, to all Thou shalt command. Yes, O my God, this day and ever I will in all things desire that only which Thou wilt, and in the way Thou wilt! I submit entirely my will to Thine. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON THE GOOD USE OF SICKNESSES.

FIRST SUBJECT.

Hold it for certain that all bodily sicknesses, without one exception, are sent to us by GOD as precious gifts and salutary remedies to heal the infirmities of our soul. "Art thou," says S. Augustin, "worn out with a grievous cough? do thy lungs fail thee? doth a slow fever consume thee? art thou weighed down by all kinds of infirmities? Well, know that all these things come from GOD; and as He loveth thee tenderly, be assured that He doth not send thee these evils but in order to draw from them greater good to thee."¹ If He deprives thee of health, it is that He sees sickness to be infinitely more beneficial to thy salvation. Therefore cherish it, as coming to thee from the hand of a tender father, a faithful friend, a charitable physician. In the midst of thy pains, repeat frequently these words of the high-priest Eli: "It is the LORD; let Him do what seemeth Him

¹ Tussi laboras, pulmone deficis, cibum stomachus respuit . . . multimodo morborum genere afficeris? sed et si oculum habes, si cordatus es, Dei dona sunt. (S. Aug. lib. de Visit. Infirmit. cap. 3.)

good."¹ In whatever way He dispose of my health and my life, I will acknowledge it to be right.

SECOND SUBJECT.

When GOD sends thee sicknesses, He does it for several wise and paternal reasons, which I will put before thee. 1st. GOD sends thee sicknesses to punish thee for thy sins, which are very numerous, and for which thou hast scarcely been penitent. Therefore thou shouldst accept them with all resignation, and say with the holy man Job: "LORD, I am guilty, and the evils wherewith Thou afflictest me are less than my iniquities."² 2nd. GOD sends thee sicknesses to bring thee back to Himself. When thou art enjoying perfect health, thou attachest thyself little by little to earth; thou thinkest less of the blessings of eternity; thou art more neglectful of thy duties to GOD. But thy merciful FATHER, Who watches over thee, strikes thee in His compassion, and by pain of body reforms thee, draws thee into the right path, and compels thee to cast thyself again into His arms. 3rd. GOD sends thee sicknesses to humble thee. It is very difficult to be healthy in body, and withal humble of soul: prosperity blinds, and health takes away the remembrance of death. But if sickness come to visit thee, then thou realisest all thy weakness; thou rememberest the shortness of life: and at the sight of the temple of thy body, which is falling into decay, thou art no longer tempted to think thyself immortal, or to fix thy hopes here below. 4th. GOD sends thee sicknesses to try thee. Think not that He treats thee as an enemy because He

¹ 1 Sam. iii. 18.

² Peccavi, et sicut condignus eram, non accepi.

afflicts thee with sufferings ; rather it is a certain mark of His love. He wills first to purify thee by pain from the stains which thy soul has contracted in thy attachments to creatures. Moreover, He intends to assure Himself of thy faithfulness : for the LORD is pleased to make His servants pass through the fire of tribulation, and to try them as gold is tried.¹ It was thus He dealt with Tobias : “ Because thou wast pleasing to GOD, said the angel, it was needful for thee to be tried by temptation.”² Of all the trials where-with GOD tries men, there is no greater, or a more certain one, than bodily infirmity : because in depriving us of health, it takes away the foundation of all earthly blessings and enjoyments. Rejoice, then, when the LORD sends thee sicknesses ; it is a proof He loves thee, and wills to render thee more pure and pleasing in His eyes. Yes, rejoice ; for it is then chiefly thou canst practise humility, gentleness, patience, resignation, faithfulness, submission to the decrees of Heaven, detachment from life, and a multitude of other virtues. It is then that thou canst prove to God that thou art really His servant and His child. If thy body groan when it is weighed down by the burden of sickness, turn and struggle restlessly—it is no sin : but thy soul must remain quiet and submissive. Be, then, ever patient ; for after a few days of suffering thou wilt be abundantly comforted, and shalt be found worthy of GOD.³

¹ Uram eos sicut uritur argentum, probabo eos sicut probatur aurum. (Zachar. xiii. 9.)

² Quoniam acceptus eras Deo, necesse erat ut tentatio probaret te. (Tob. xii. 10.)

³ Qui paucis vexati, in multis benè disponentur : quoniam Deus tentavit illos, et invenit illos dignos se. (Sap. iii. 5.)

THIRD SUBJECT.

GOD sends thee sicknesses (5th) to give thee opportunities of acquiring merits. It is impossible to tell all the spiritual treasures which a sick person may acquire, who is a prey to intense pain, and yet never yields to grief or impatience. Faith assures us that a short and slight moment of affliction, well endured in this life, brings to us an eternal weight of glory.¹ And who can measure to us the extent of the recompence which GOD prepares for those who spend, not a moment, but days, months, and whole years in very great pain and continual sufferings? Who can comprehend the acceptableness of a poor sick person who remains calm and tranquil in his sufferings, and who, being perfectly submissive to the will of his Sovereign LORD, says with holy Job: "Shall I receive good at the hand of the LORD, and shall I not receive evil?" It is He who has wounded me, and He will heal me. O my GOD, be mine the consolation of knowing that Thou sparest me not in this life. Consume me with pains, I am willing; but suffer not that any murmurings against Thy providence should escape me, neither that I should dispute Thy decrees, which are most righteous and holy. 6th. GOD sends thee sicknesses to conform thee to the likeness of His SON JESUS CHRIST our SAVIOUR. S. Paul tells us we shall be saved only inasmuch as we become like unto our Divine LORD.² But His whole life was continual suffering. Born in a stable in the depth of winter, He passed His infancy amid the privations of exile, and lived poor and destitute of everything. He died on

¹ 2 Cor. iv. 17.² Rom. viii. 29.

the cross. All this, as S. Peter tells us, was to teach us to suffer patiently.¹ Regard it, then, as a great blessing to be stretched on a bed of pain. Think of JESUS on the Cross ; see His body exhausted with loss of blood, consumed with burning thirst, covered with agonising wounds, and let this thought encourage thee to resignation and patience. If thou suffer with JESUS, and in His likeness, it is certain thou wilt one day share His glory. Take courage, therefore, and never faint ; thy pain, thy sickness, thy infirmities, will come to an end ; thy reward will last for ever.

PRAYER TO BE SAID IN TIME OF SICKNESS.

O my God, I deserve to be deprived of health, because I have for a long time misused it, and spent it in offending Thee ! I thank Thee for afflicting me in this life, since thereby Thou givest me a proof that Thou wilt comfort me in eternity. Chastise me, O LORD, during this life, provided Thou grant me grace and mercy after death. Cause that my body, which I have so often defiled with sin, may become a burnt-offering of patience, sacrificed to Thy greatness, Thy love, and Thy justice. Cut, burn my flesh during time, I am ready, provided Thou deliver me from the sorrows of eternity. O gracious JESUS, who knowest how weak I am, give me patience and resignation, and then do with me all Thou wilt ! I cast myself into Thine arms, and there will I remain ever submissive to Thy holy and adorable will. So be it.

¹ 1 S. Pet. ii. 21.

MEDITATION X.

JESUS GOES TO MEET HIS ENEMIES, AND RECEIVES THE KISS OF THE TRAITOR JUDAS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

No sooner had JESUS CHRIST been comforted by the Angel, than He forthwith ceased His prayer, and arising, bathed still in His sweat of blood, went to rejoin His sleeping disciples, and arousing them, said : "Rise up, let us go: the hour of My betrayal is come, and Judas and his companions are not far from hence." Then with heroic courage, His heart kindled with the desire to give Himself up to death for love of us, He advanced towards His enemies, with the intention of surrendering Himself into their hands.

1. Behold with what promptitude our Divine SAVIOUR accepts the bitter cup of His Passion, and with what resignation He consents to die on a shameful gibbet ! What gave Him that wonderful strength ? it was prayer. Prayer filled His soul with an all-divine energy, and made Him overcome all that nature could put forth in opposition to His submission to the commands of His heavenly FATHER. Oh, who can tell the marvellous effects which prayer works in the soul of him who has recourse to this powerful weapon with confidence and perseverance ! Thou often feelest a keen repugnance to overcome thy evil inclinations ; penitence frightens thee ; thou feelest no strength to make, when necessary, an unhesitating sacrifice to please GOD ; sufferings inspire thee with

horror, the very name of mortification and self-renunciation blanches thy cheek ; well, only pray, and thou wilt be wholly changed ; pray, and thou wilt soon find happiness in the very things which before had frightened thee.

2. See how JESUS went forth to meet suffering. He did not wait to be dragged against His will ; but He went of His own free will, and most lovingly. He invites thee to do like Him, and to meet mortifications, and opportunities of suffering, in order to lay up a greater treasure in heaven. It was thus that all the saints did, after the example of our SAVIOUR ; they waited not for sufferings and pain to come, but they sought them out. S. Lawrence laid himself down on the gridiron ; S. Andrew ran to the cross which was prepared for him, and hailed it with a transport of joy. Many mothers flew to martyrdom, carrying their infants in their arms, to make them sharers in their sacrifice. Arise, then, O cowardly soul, and have courage to give up thy bad habits, to have recourse to penitence, and to go forth to meet humiliation and suffering for the love of JESUS CHRIST. But alas ! thou hast, it may be, too little virtue to desire and seek out the cross for thyself. Learn, then, at least to endure with patience the tribulations which the LORD sends thee, and fail not to receive them from His divine hand, without disquieting thyself, or showing any sign of impatience.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, who didst so love sufferings and torments, when shall I be able to imitate the generous ardour wherewith Thou wentest forth to meet cruelty and death ! I confess the extreme cow-

ardice of my soul, which is disquieted and trembles at the sight of the least tribulation which threatens it. Fortify my heart with heavenly patience in all the evils of this mortal life, that I may not lose the advantages I might draw from them, if I suffer them for love of Thee. I accept, in a spirit of penitence, every thing grievous which may befall me, such as pains, sicknesses, griefs, injuries. All these crosses, O my God, I ought to seek with eagerness, that I might, by bearing them patiently, make amends for the multitude of my past sins. For, O gracious JESUS, if Thou, who wast perfect innocence, didst lovingly accept the sufferings of Thy passion and death, is it not very just that I, who am laden with iniquities, should not refuse to pay the penalty of my sins, by accepting with resignation all the evils Thou art pleased to assign to me? I accept them, then, in the spirit of penitence for my past sins, and by the help of Thy grace I purpose to endure them always with courage, resignation, and love. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Scarcely had JESUS ceased speaking, when Judas appeared with a troop of armed men, of whom he was the head and leader. Now, in order that they might not in the darkness of the night seize some one else by mistake for JESUS, the traitor said to them: "Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is He; take Him, and lead Him away safely."

1. Consider into what an abyss of misery that unhappy Apostle cast himself, through not having, at the very first suggestion, resisted his inclination to

avarice ; through having separated himself from his Divine Master, and through having forsaken those holy practices which he had long followed in common with the other Apostles. He sold his GOD, his SAVIOUR and after sacrilegiously communicating, he betrayed Him with a kiss, and delivered Him up to His murderers ! This is a subject for the deepest meditation.

2. Judas was lost through having neglected small things, and through not having watched against his growing passions. Review thine own heart, and see if thou walkest not in his steps. Alas ! thou despisest small sins as he did ! thou but feebly checkest the impulse of thy passions ; thou no longer servest CHRIST but with indolence and coldness ; thou no longer mortifiest thy senses, and often leavest unperformed thy devotional exercises, now one, now another, such as spiritual reading, prayer, &c. Oh, tremble and turn over a new leaf ; without which thou wilt before long entirely forsake thy GOD. Who knows ! thou art perhaps very near betraying Him, and hast it may be, entered on the road which leads to everlasting perdition. I implore thee, then, fall not asleep in so dangerous a state ; and if thou wilt not be miserably lost, like Judas, shake off thy lukewarmness, and begin again to serve GOD with a faithfulness never more to degenerate.

3. Seeing that Judas, although an Apostle, ended with ruining himself for ever, do thou conceive a great dread of the terrible and impenetrable judgments of GOD. Supplicate the LORD not to give thee up to the weakness and perverseness of thy heart ! beseech Him to give thee grace to love, and constantly to practise

virtue, and to entertain evermore in thy heart a deep loathing, not only of serious sins, but also of slight faults and voluntary imperfections, which might at last separate thee from His love.

Colloquy.—LORD GOD Almighty, abandon me not, I beseech Thee, to the rage of my evil inclinations ; for without Thee I shall be lost. Have pity on my weakness, whereof Thou alone knowest the extent. Henceforth I will seek carefully to avoid small sins, being fully convinced that, if I neglect them, they will draw me into serious sins, and will but increase the violence of my passions. I am terrified by the fate of Judas, who having begun by small acts of dishonesty, gradually advanced in the career of vice, till he became guilty of the dreadful crime of betraying Thee, O JESUS ! into the hands of Thine enemies. The like wretchedness may befall me, too, if I despise, as he did, small sins, and slight omissions of my religious duties. Suffer it not, O my GOD ! Rather put into my heart a salutary fear of Thy justice, that this fear may keep me constantly united to Thee, and preserve within me the treasure of Thy heavenly grace. I firmly resolve never more to neglect to frequent the Holy Communion, prayer, spiritual reading, nor any holy practice : for I am assured that if I forsake not the practice of good works, I shall not be forsaken by Thee. Vouchsafe, therefore, to grant me the grace ever to love and practise holiness, and at the same time inspire me with so great a hatred of mortal sin, and even of the faults which appear to me small and of little consequence, that I may henceforth avoid them with the greatest care, with the intention of pleasing Thee. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

The deep perfidy of the traitor Judas appears in all its notoriety in the Garden of Olives. For the better to conceal his treachery, he chose the tenderest token of peace and friendship to be the signal thereof. Drawing near to his Divine Master with an air of hypocritical reverence, he hailed Him, and calling Him by the name of Master, had the audacity to touch the face of his GOD with his guilty lips. JESUS then said to him, in accents of ineffable love, "Friend, wherefore art thou come? Betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

1. Nothing is so painful to a generous heart as to feel itself the object of treachery; but was there ever so black a treachery as that of Judas? That unhappy man had received from his Divine Master only distinguished tokens of His confidence and tenderness, and lo! he delivered Him up to His enemies by means of a kiss. Nevertheless, consider with what sweetness—with what wonderful patience JESUS endured that betrayal. He rejected not that monster of ingratitude—that unnatural heart; but, on the contrary, received him with humility, gave him a gracious reception, embraced him with all the effusion of tender love. Not satisfied with these outward marks of benevolence, He urged him by the inspirations of His grace, called him, excited him to penitence, sought to constrain him to conversion. Oh, immensity of the love of JESUS! Learn from thence to be no longer so harsh and implacable towards those who have offended thee. Learn to endure with meekness the wrongs, treachery, and ill-

treatment of those upon the strength of whose attachment thou hadst most reckoned. Be humbled for the many movements of anger and impatience, for the many harsh and threatening words of which thou hast been guilty towards those who have in aught been wanting towards thee, and blush that thou hast so long nourished in thy heart feelings of hatred and aversion towards them. Resolve henceforth to render good for evil, and to give proofs of affection for the love of JESUS CHRIST, even to those of whom thou hast most to complain. It is by this token thou wilt be recognised for a true Christian.

2. Learn also from all this what great confidence thou oughtest to have in the mercy of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. Lo, our Divine Master refused not the kiss of Judas, even while he treacherously betrayed Him : He gave him the sweet name of friend, offered him forgiveness, tendered him His affection. What charity ! what inexhaustible tenderness ! Couldst thou, after that, think that the SAVIOUR would reject thee, if thou camest back to Him ? certainly not. However great a sinner thou mayst be, if thou repent, He will not reject the kiss of peace thou offerest unto Him. He will rather receive it with tenderness, provided that each time thou cherish in thy heart a very earnest desire to forsake sin, to change thy life, to make reparation for thy sins by penitence. Open, then, thy soul to confide in Him. Imagine to thyself that JESUS is beside thee ; cast thyself at His feet, humbly ask His forgiveness, beseech Him from the depth of thy soul not to suffer thee to be any more separated from Him by sin ; but so to kindle within thee His holy love,

that each day thou mayest grow in holiness and in perfection, and that thou mayest more and more deserve to be called His child, and to be so indeed by Thy faithfulness to His service.

Colloquy.—O gracious JESUS, I prostrate myself before Thee, and kiss with reverence Thy sacred Hands and Feet. I hope Thou wilt not refuse the homage of a poor sinner, such as I am. I trust that, having mercifully received me, Thou wilt not suffer me to be again separated from Thee; I hope it, O my God! because Thou art infinitely good, and takest infinite interest in the welfare of my soul. Kindle me with the fire of Thy Divine love, that such love may unite me indissolubly to Thee, and maintain me in faithfulness to Thy service, even to my last breath. Grant me, likewise, grace to love my neighbour as myself for love of Thee, even when he has offended me. I purpose to render good for evil to all those who have aggrieved me, to give them proofs of affection, and never to revenge myself. O GOD, Who art the Supreme Good and Eternal Blessedness, I love Thee with my whole heart, with my whole soul, and more than myself: for love of Thee, I love my neighbour; and will always do good to whosoever may do me evil. Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Under all circumstances, whether those that are happy or unhappy through life, never fail to have recourse to prayer. When thou art happy, pray, in

order that thy gladness may not blind and ruin thee, as it has many others. In affliction pray, that thou fall not into guilty dejection, but rather that thou mayest be comforted. In temptations pray, that thou mayest receive from on high the strength thou needest to overcome the enemies of thy soul. In health as in sickness, in wealth as in poverty, in exaltation as in humiliation, pray ; pray always, because thou ever needest help. With prayer, even wert thou the most hardened of all sinners, thou wouldest end by obtaining grace and pardon from GOD, and wouldest be saved. On the other hand, without prayer, even if thou wast already a saint, thou wouldest gradually fall away and be lost. Therefore pray on all occasions, and never be weary of praying.

2. Man naturally dreads all that causes him to suffer, anxiously shuns all which would draw upon him any humiliation or calamity ; therefore we look upon as heroic the conduct of the many saints who sought humiliations and crosses, and who went forth to meet sufferings and contempt ; it seems to us that we have rather to admire than to imitate them in such things ; but this is a great mistake. Why should we not do what they have done ? Were they not men like us ? Felt they not the same antipathies we feel ? Moreover, have we not with us the same Sacraments they had ? was not the GOD Whom they served the same Whom we serve ? Is He less willing to be bountiful to us than He was to them ? No, doubtless. Wherefore, then, resemble we so little the saints, and JESUS CHRIST, our model ? It is that we are cowardly and pusillanimous ; it is that we ask nothing, or scarcely

any thing, of GOD ; it is that we have never willed to suffer in aught. Ah, let us begin to have for once a truly Christian courage ! Let us look sufferings, humiliation, and contempt in the face ; let us know how to meet them, and soon, with GOD's help, we shall have the sweet experience which all the saints have had,—we shall comprehend all the happiness of suffering. One said, "Either let me suffer or die !" another, "O my GOD, let me suffer and be despised!"

3. O thou who readest my words, thinkest thou it is impossible to reach unto such perfection ? Well, to spare thy weakness, I will not say unto thee, "Go and seek for suffering and reproach !" but I will say, "Accept with calmness, resignation, and love, all the sorrows which GOD sends thee ; look upon them as precious graces, and never murmur." A day will come when thou wilt have increased so much in love for thy GOD as to feel courage within thee to say, moreover, "O JESUS, I will, I desire to suffer and to be despised for love of Thee !" May that day soon shine upon thee.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. I have already cautioned thee, but it is not useless to caution thee again, to flee from small sins most anxiously, and to be constantly faithful to thy least devotional exercises. If thou adopt not these two precautions, thou wilt fall little by little, like Judas, into laxity, and wilt perhaps be lost like him. A Christian should never grow lax in the service of his GOD, if he will not expose his soul's salvation to the greatest peril. Unto what point hast thou at-

tained herein? must thou not make serious resolutions upon this subject?

2. Know that the more thou art advancing in years the more thou art bound to serve GOD, inasmuch as His mercies increase with thy years. Reckon all the mercies He has vouchsafed to thee since thou hast been in the world, all the dangers from which He has delivered thee, all the evils from which He has preserved thee, all the blessings which He has heaped upon thee, and tell me if, after that, thou hast any reason to love Him less than before, and to become lax in His service?

3. Show thyself, then, more than ever faithful to thy GOD: spend the residue of thy life in learning to love Him more and more. What will be thy regret at the hour of death, at having laboured so little for His glory! Labour, then, with all thy strength while thou canst; never weary in serving Him Who is never weary of heaping blessings upon thee; love with thy whole soul Him Who has loved thee from all eternity. And since JESUS is always the same to thee, be ever the same towards Him in fervency, and show Him thou art not ungrateful.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. It will happen to thee, perhaps, in the course of thy life, to be betrayed by some in whom thou hast placed thy confidence, and whom thou hast regarded as thy friends; thy heart will be deeply wounded, and thou wilt be inclined to distrust every one. Yield not to this feeling; it would be unjust. Yes, GOD will sometimes permit thy dearest friends to deceive thee

and forsake thee, but He will act thus for thy greater good alone. Submit, then, to what thou canst not prevent; remain calm in the midst of the storm, and be comforted by the thought that JESUS was Himself betrayed by one of His Apostles; and that even though all men should forsake thee, He never will, if thou do not leave Him first.

2. It is hard to be treacherously treated by a friend, it is true; but if thou art wise, thou wilt not be irritated by it; and thy sole revenge will be to do him good. Accept the treacheries of others, in reparation for those whereby thou hast so often sinned against GOD. He will then blot them out of His remembrance.

3. Lastly, under those circumstances, imitate in all things the beautiful conduct of our Divine LORD towards Judas. Be kind, indulgent, and full of gentleness towards those who offend thee. Thy moderation will be pleasing to GOD, and will perhaps win back to thee the friendship of those who, for self-interest or other causes, had been estranged from thee.

MEDITATION XI.

THE SOLDIERS LED BY JUDAS, PREPARE TO LAY
HANDS ON OUR DIVINE SAVIOUR.

FIRST SUBJECT.

THE soldiers who accompanied Judas having approached the SAVIOUR to lay hands upon Him, JESUS advanced to meet them, and said, "Whom seek ye?" They answered, "JESUS of Nazareth." JESUS re-

plied, "I am He." Scarcely had He pronounced these words, when they went backward and fell to the ground.¹

1. Behold how great was the power of the Redeemer, since, with a single word, He overturned and terrified a whole band of armed soldiers: but admire withal His infinite goodness, since, in thus overturning them, His intention was one of mercy. He would make known to them Who He was, and what His power, in order that they might enter into their own hearts and see their guilt, and forsake so impious an undertaking. It is thus the LORD frequently deals with thee when thou offendest Him; He sends thee sorrows, sicknesses, persecutions, crosses of every kind, not with the sole intention of avenging His outraged glory, but that thou mayest return into thyself and be converted. Thank Him for this His so merciful dealing towards thee, and pray Him to grant thee grace to profit thereby for the future, and to labour seriously to become better.

2. At the sight of JESUS CHRIST overthrowing by a single word that band of soldiers, understand how easy it is for GOD to punish us when we offend Him, and even if it please Him, to destroy us; since we are in His sight but vile insects, which the least pressure of the fingers can crush. Understand how greatly He could revenge Himself on thee, who hast so often offended Him, and beseech Him to forgive thee all the sins of thy past life, to blot them out in His mercy, and not to punish thee in the severity of His justice, for all the iniquities which thou hast committed.

¹ S. John xviii. 4—6.

3. If the presence alone of JESUS CHRIST, poor, forsaken, worn out with bitter sorrow, was so terrible to His enemies, what will it then be, when at the day of the Last Judgment He will appear in the brightness of His glory, accompanied by a whole army of heavenly Spirits, and surrounded by power and majesty? What wilt thou do, O Christian soul, in that terrible day, if thou hast not by penitence made reparation for the sins of thy life? How wilt thou escape the just wrath of the Sovereign Judge? Oh, return to the LORD from this day, and live henceforth in such a manner, that thou mayest have nothing to fear from the avenging thunderbolts of GOD, Whose might and Whose justice know no limits.

*Colloquy.—*LORD JESUS, I believe Thou art the Almighty GOD; I believe that by one word alone Thou drewest out of chaos Heaven, earth, angels, and men, and that one act of Thy will alone will be sufficient to make them return thither. I dread Thy terrible omnipotence, and I will no more, by again offending Thee, risk Thy strokes of wrath. I have, alas, too greatly sinned against Thee all my life. Likewise, O God, I readily submit to all the scourges which it may please Thee to lay on me, for my past iniquities: vouchsafe only to spare my weakness. If Thou punish me in this world, I know Thou dealest with me as a loving FATHER, and that Thou wouldest thereby compel me to return within myself; Thou wouldest inspire me with a salutary terror of the eternal punishments of hell, which may not only prevent me from yielding myself up to sin, but may also lead me to repentance of all the sins which have multiplied over my head.

Assist me, O my GOD, to enter into Thy loving dealings towards me, and teach me to make good use of the sicknesses, afflictions, and other trials which it may please Thee to send me. Since all the evils of life come to me from Thy Hand, for the greater good of my soul, I accept them with gratitude, in reparation for the offences committed against Thy glory. Strike me, O LORD; punish me as much as Thou wilt; but at the same time give me the strength and resignation which are necessary for me. I thank Thee for permitting me in this life to receive the punishment of my sins, being full of hope that Thou wilt show me mercy in the next. O JESUS, Thou beholdest me humbled before Thee, covered with confusion because of my ingratitude towards Thee; have pity, have pity on me! In the name of Thy most bitter Passion, forgive me my sins, and grant me grace worthily and sincerely to repent, even to my last breath. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

The soldiers could never have succeeded in seizing and binding the SAVIOUR had He not willed it. It was, in fact, very easy for Him to escape while they were stretched on the ground. He might have summoned to His aid numberless legions of angels; but He did it not. His desire was to die for the salvation of man; therefore He permitted the attendants of Judas to rise from the ground to capture His sacred Person—to load Him with chains. But in all this He forgot not His own children, and speaking to the soldiers with the authority of a master, He forbade

them to do any harm to His Apostles, or to interfere with their freedom.

1. JESUS could have used His omnipotence to escape from His enemies, and burst the fetters wherewith they had bound Him ; but He chose rather to give Himself up to their blind fury, because He would show us how much He loved us, and prove to us that it was with His own free will He accepted the outrages of His Passion, and the cruel death which was to conclude it. Thank Him for this infinite mercy ; and be assured that at the moment when He was thus giving Himself up to the torment of the Cross, not only He thought of all mankind in general, but also of thee in a very special manner, as much as if thou hadst been alone on earth, and that it was for thee individually that He consented to shed His Blood, that thou mightest be delivered from the pains of Hell. Yes, it was for thee He willed to suffer, that thou mightest one day enjoy the glory of Heaven. It was for thee He willed to die in time, that thou mightest receive life in eternity. Adore the ineffable love of a God merciful and full of love to thee.

2. What hast thou hitherto done to thank JESUS for so much love ? Thou shouldst have proved thy gratitude to Him every instant ; thou oughtest to have poured forth praises at His feet ; but thou hast only offended Him ! Thou oughtest to have dedicated to His service all the emotions of thy heart, and all the moments of thy life ; but thou hast done the contrary ! Mourn, then, for thine ingratitude and coldness, and think seriously of making amends before death come to surprise thee.

3. Learn, moreover, to know all that the heart of our Divine Redeemer contains of truly paternal solicitude for us. In the midst of all His sorrows, in the presence of a band of armed soldiers about to seize Him, He forgot Himself, He thought alone of others. He suffered His enemies to dare all against Himself, but used His Divine authority to prohibit their raising a hand against His own beloved ones. Oh, happy is it to serve a Master Who takes such care of those belonging to Him ! what can we fear beneath the wings of such a Protector ! Give thyself up, then, for ever to JESUS, and be well assured that no calamity can befall thee, unless He have permitted it for His glory, and for the greater good of thy soul. Happy he who loves Him, and who can say to Him in all truthfulness, "Thou art my LORD and my GOD !" Seeing that JESUS thought of those dear to Him at a moment when any other person would no doubt have thought only of himself, seeing that He watched over them that nothing grievous might befall them, doth not thy heart open with confidence to so good a Master ? would it be still possible to distrust His love for thee ? couldst thou still fear His forsaking thee in the midst of danger, and abandoning thee to the fury of thine enemies ? Oh, no, doubtless ; be, then, always trustful. Whatever circumstances of soul or body He place thee in, remain in peace. Confide to Him above all the care of thy eternal salvation ; and if at times the devil suggest to thee to distrust His mercy, remember the love He has shown thee, in giving Himself up to the power of His enemies to save thee ; and never suffer this mistrust to enter thy soul, because it would

exceedingly wrong thy Divine L ORD, and be detrimental to thy salvation. Confidence for ever in the mercy of JESUS: such should be thy motto.

Colloquy.—Most gracious SAVIOUR, I thank Thee for that infinite goodness which led Thee to give up Thyself into the hands of Thine enemies, to snatch me from the bondage of Satan. I will henceforth show Thee gratitude, in becoming the slave of Thy holy will in all things. O gracious JESUS, what did it not cost Thee to satisfy Divine justice for my sins! I deserved to be given into the hands of the devil, as a punishment for the many serious sins of which I have been guilty towards Thee; and if at this moment I am not burning in hell, I owe it to Thee, and to the tender compassion which gave Thee up to the power of Thy tormentors. Thou gavest up Thyself without murmuring to their rage and cruelty, in order that I might obtain the forgiveness of my sins, and recover Thy grace. Be Thy infinite mercy for ever praised! As a thank-offering, I will henceforth strive with all my power to love Thee as Thou meritest to be loved. Yes, O my GOD, I love Thee more than myself. I love Thee more than all earthly possessions, more than all creatures. I dedicate myself unreservedly to Thy service and to Thy good pleasure; and I will seek to fulfil perfectly Thy holy will in all and for all, knowing myself to be Thy slave, saved and purchased by Thee. I accept from Thy fatherly hand all the external and internal sorrows which it may please Thee to send me; and whatever calamity may happen to me, I will have an unlimited trust in Thy mercy to my last breath. O JESUS, where can I be so safe as in the shelter of

Thy protection? What can the devil do against me if Thou lovest me and if I love Thee? I love Thee, therefore, with all the strength of my soul, and will always love Thee in time and in eternity, in order that Thou mayest always be my support, my protector, and my treasure. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

When JESUS had given to His enemies power to take possession of His Person, these, like hungry wolves, threw themselves upon Him with fury, and while arranging the cords wherewith they would bind Him, they loaded Him with blows and insults. Then S. Peter, seeing what was going on, and unable to restrain his indignation, drew a sword, and struck one of the servants of the high priest, named Malchus, and cut off his right ear. JESUS repressed by a word the too ardent zeal of His Apostle; and after healing the servant by a miracle, He calmly said to Peter, "Put up thy sword into its sheath, for whoso useth the sword, shall perish by the sword: the cup which My FATHER hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

1. Who could fathom the depth of the love of the heart of JESUS CHRIST? Not only He suffered not the least insult to be offered to those who were ill-treating Him, but He pushed His magnanimity even to the doing them good, working a miracle to restore health to one amongst them, even at the moment when they were striving to take away His life. It is thus He has dealt thousands of times towards thee; for when thou wast His enemy, when thou gavest thyself up to sin, and to all the caprices of thy corrupt heart, and

that thou thoughtest only of offending Him, He not only was preserving thy life, though He might so easily have struck thee with death, but likewise He loaded thee with graces and precious mercies ; He spoke to thy heart, He recalled thee gently into the path of righteousness, He generously offered thee forgiveness.

2. Be astonished and filled with admiration at contemplating the infinite mercy of JESUS CHRIST, and thy own deep ingratitude. Mourn for the hardness of heart wherewith thou hast so often rejected the grace of conversion which He offered thee, and humbly ask forgiveness for the same. Beseech the SAVIOUR to render to thee, as to the high priest's servant, good for evil, and to heal the maimed ear of thy soul, that it may better receive His heavenly inspirations, and more faithfully obey His word.

Colloquy.—Since Thou hast commanded me, O my SAVIOUR, to do good to those who do me evil, and that Thou hast facilitated to me the means of doing so by Thine own sacred example, and especially by overwhelming me with benefits, while I loaded Thee with outrages by my sins, I will obey that which Thou commandest me. Yes, O my GOD, I will obey Thee ! Yet suffer me humbly to confess to Thee, I often find this obedience very difficult, and I cannot of myself practise it. Vouchsafe, then, to give me so much strength and courage, as to love my enemies for love of Thee, and to render them good for evil. I know how much Thou lovest charity towards our neighbour ; I know that nothing so pleases Thy heart as to see it exercised ; I know that one day Thou wilt gloriously recompense it in heaven : then, O gracious JESUS,

because I love Thee, and that I will do that which is pleasing to Thee, I beseech Thee to shed Thy most precious gifts on those who have offended me in any manner. Sanctify their souls, give health to their bodies, bless their undertakings, and grant them all the graces they may need. I will myself for the future, render to them, as much as I can, all the services which they have a right to expect from me ; and I will abstain from hurting them in anything, above all by my words. I forgive them all the evil they have done me, or desired to do me ; and will only revenge myself by loving them and praying for them. O gracious GOD, load them with Thy blessings, and at the same time forgive me my sins, as I forgive them ! Amen.

Resolutions.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Every time it befalls thee to experience some grief, or humiliation, or sickness, remember that it is the LORD's paternal hand which strikes thee, in order to render thee better. Hadst thou never anything to suffer, thou wouldst soon forget GOD and thy duties ; but the trials which befall thee compel thee to return into thyself, and to acknowledge that in all things thou art dependant on GOD : they bring thee back unknown to thyself beneath the yoke of His holy law, and thus render thee a service for which thou wilt be thankful through all eternity. Receive them, then, always with resignation and even with joy, and look upon them rather as favours granted thee by Heaven, than as punishments which He inflicts upon thee.

2. It is of faith that after thy death thou wilt have to stand before the tribunal of that same JESUS, whose presence alone sufficed to terrify and overthrow a whole band of armed soldiers. What will be thy terror, if when appearing for the first time before Him, and casting thine eyes upon His countenance, thou perceivest that thou art in the presence not of a tender and merciful FATHER, but of an angry Judge ? And yet, nevertheless, it is the sorrow which would infallibly befall thee, if thou refusedst to make reparation by thy penitence for the irregularities of thy past life. What does thy conscience say to thee ? Art thou at present in a state to appear before thy GOD with confidence ? Is thy account ready ? Hast thou confessed all thy sins ? Hast thou laboured to efface them by penitence ? Say.

3. I hear thee answer, To-morrow I will convert myself; to-morrow I will confess : to-morrow I will come out of my coldness, and will serve GOD with fresh ardour. And I warn thee that thou art highly imprudent to put off till to-morrow what thou canst do to-day. Knowest thou for certain that death will not have suddenly struck thee before to-morrow ? Knowest thou even if thou hast yet one hour to live ? Oh, be wiser ; return quickly to thy GOD, risk not thy eternity by thy slowness. Since the LORD has had patience to wait for thee hitherto, go and cast thyself into His arms, regain by thy fervour the time thou hast lost, begin to lead a holy life worthy of a Christian, and thus thou wilt prepare for thyself a favourable judgment, and a crown of glory in Heaven.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. A very efficacious means whereby to advance in the practice of Christian holiness, and in the love of our LORD, is to have in our heart an unlimited confidence in the goodness and mercy of our Divine LORD. Who merits such confidence more than JESUS? He is our Friend, our Fellow-traveller, our Food, our SAVIOUR, our Father. In the midst of the storms of this miserable life, He makes Himself our Pilot; in temptations, He becomes our Protector and Defence; in the fire of persecution, He is our Fortress and Shelter; when we are forsaken by all men, He abides with us, He wipes away our tears, He comforts us, He is in the stead of all else to us.

2. O thou who lovest JESUS, have confidence in Him under all circumstances. Art thou tempted? trust in Him. Art thou sick? trust in Him. Art thou troubled and disquieted by reason of thy past sins? trust still. Thinkest thou that God has forsaken, forgotten, rejected thee, because of thy present miseries? nevertheless trust Him. Thy trust in JESUS will not be in vain. It will win thee His heart, draw on thee His choicest gifts, load thee with joy in this life, and cause thee to enter into Heaven after thy death.

3. JESUS never forsakes a soul which has placed its trust in Him. He takes especial care of it, watches continually over it, carries it in weakness, answers its prayers, anticipates all its desires, softens all its sorrows. Give up thyself, then, to this trust, and whatever may befall thee, have recourse to it.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Never cherish in thy heart the least bitterness towards any who have offended thee; and forgive them, as thou wouldest have GOD forgive thee.
2. If thou feelest any repugnance to forgive those who have rendered thee evil for the good thou hast done them, remember that thou art a sinner, and needest the mercy of GOD; and that thou wilt be treated as thou shalt have treated others.

3. Lastly, forget not that in hating thy brother it is JESUS CHRIST Himself Whom thou hatest; and that in forgiving thine enemy, it is JESUS Who stands in his place to thee. Has not that Divine Master said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me?" What a powerful motive is here to persuade thee to be ever good, generous, compassionate towards those who have caused thee any sorrow!

MEDITATION XII.

JESUS IS MADE PRISONER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

JESUS addressed the soldiers who, while ill-treating Him, were preparing to bind Him, these words full of dignity: "Are ye come out as against a thief, with swords and staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But this is your hour and the power of darkness."

1. Be never weary of admiring the infinite gentleness of our Divine SAVIOUR in the midst of the outrages wherewith He was overwhelmed. He beheld Himself surrounded by a great multitude of vile and contemptible men bent upon His destruction; and instead of complaining, being irritated, or revenging Himself on account of their insolence, He speaks with a wonderful calmness and equanimity of spirit. Yet it was not the power of revenging Himself which He lacked, since a single word of His had sufficed to freeze those same men with terror, and to throw them to the ground half dead. Had He willed, He could have crushed them all under His Feet; but it was more Godlike to leave us an excellent example of patience and moderation, under a circumstance most trying to both.

2. Learn from this conduct of the SAVIOUR to show thyself meek and amenable; and at no time, because things go contrary to thy wishes, to yield to fits of anger, violence, and ill-humour, which are offensive to God, which scandalise our neighbour, and cast disquietude and disorder into thy soul. There is no great difficulty in showing oneself kind and affable when all goes well, nor is there any merit in so doing; but to preserve calmness and meekness in the midst of affronts, losses, and contradictions, is the mark of a true disciple of JESUS CHRIST. Art thou recognised by this mark? Is it not rather true that thou art unable to endure anything; and that the least contradiction, the slightest disappointment, is enough to throw thee into a state of impatience, or even a fit of passion? Is it not true that under any shock or wound which thy

self-love may sustain, thou canst no longer be calm, or maintain thy soul in patience? Is it not true that at such times those around thee, or who are dependent on thee, suffer much from thy ill-humour? Oh, unworthy disciple of JESUS CHRIST, how long wilt thou refuse to walk in the steps of thy Master? how long wilt thou refuse to imitate His example? Humble thyself before Him; be confounded at the numerous faults which the unevenness of thy temper has caused thee to commit; and ask of Him grace for the future to be more calm and tranquil, whether thy affairs go on according to thy will, or succeed less well than thou wouldest desire. Submit thyself henceforth without murmuring, for the love of God, to what thou canst not prevent; abide in peace in the midst of reverses, griefs, and contradictions; and by these means thou wilt be less unhappy in this world, and thou wilt, through patience, lay up treasure in heaven.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, teacher of meekness and patience, I blush when I think of the impatience and ill-humour to which I have so often yielded! I repent with my whole heart of offences I have committed against Thee, and those which I might have occasioned to my neighbour. I desire, O good JESUS! to correct myself, and do better for the future; wherefore it is I beseech Thee to pour into my soul the spirit of mortification, in order that I may repress my gusts of anger, and preserve my heart calm and tranquil, when any too strong passion would trouble it. Grant to me a great tranquillity of soul, and an unalterable resignation in occasions of difficulty, and in the calamities which may fall upon me. Grant that I may

never yield to ill-humour; and that whatever befalls me, I may ever remain united to Thee in meekness and peace of soul. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

When the soldiers had taken possession of the person of JESUS CHRIST, they bound Him with violence; and as though they were dealing with a malefactor, loaded Him with chains, and insulting Him, prepared to drag Him out of the garden.

1. Marvel yet again at the exceeding sweetness which JESUS showed while the soldiers were busied thus in binding Him. He lent Himself with perfect condescension to all the caprice of that insolent rabble; and like the lamb which is being led to the slaughter, He suffered Himself to be bound without uttering a single complaint or offering the least resistance. Like Samson of old, he could have easily broken the fetters wherewith they sought to bind Him; a single act of His will could have burst them in a moment. But stronger fetters kept Him a prisoner: submission to His FATHER and love for us. Those were the chains which hindered His escaping from His enemies, which conducted Him through dreadful sufferings to death.

2. Beholding JESUS thus bound as a thief for love of thee, and to expiate thy sins, wouldst thou still be ungrateful enough not to love a GOD so full of tenderness; a GOD Who would bind thee to Himself, not by chains of iron, but by the most sweet chains of His love; not to put thee to death or deprive thee of freedom, but to bestow on thee the true liberty of the

children of GOD, and eternal life? No, doubtless; but thou wouldst render Him love for love. Then resolve to dedicate thyself wholly to His service. He burns with desire to load thee with the chains of His love, and to attach thee closely to Himself. Already He has been a long while knocking at the door of thy heart, beseeching thee to open it to Him. Be not deaf to His voice, and reject Him not; but give thyself unreservedly to Him, who, to show thee His tenderness, gave Himself up voluntarily to so many sorrows and sufferings, and beseech Him to bind thee to Himself so firmly, that nothing in the world may ever separate thee from Him more.

Colloquy.—Bind, O LORD, my memory with the chains of Thy holy love, that it may never more forget the many graces and favours wherewith Thou loadest me each day; bind my eyes, that they may never again turn to look upon any bad or dangerous object; bind my tongue, that it may never more murmur against Thy providence, or yield to detraction, or pronounce a word of levity or idleness; but grant that it may incessantly praise Thee, and exalt Thy holy Name; bind my feet, that they may never more wander in the paths of iniquity, but be constantly directed in the way of Thy holy commandments. In short, bind me entirely, that I may never more do anything which may displease Thee. I offer myself, O GOD, and dedicate myself to Thee wholly. Bind with the strongest bands of Thy grace my will to the observance of Thy holy law. Unite my heart to Thine, and suffer me not to be at any time separated from Thee by committing a mortal sin. Confirm me in the practice of Christian

virtues. Whatever it costs me, with Thy help I will die in Thy love. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Consider the infamous treatment which the soldiers and the populace inflicted on our LORD in all these things. Filled with hatred and fury, we may presume, they threw Him several times on the ground, and trampled upon Him ; and not satisfied with overwhelming Him with blows and tearing out His hair and beard, they loaded Him with insults and ignominies of every kind, committing excesses worthy of hell.

1. How great was the humility of our Divine SAVIOUR, in suffering Himself to be thus treated ! He whose throne is exalted above the seraphim, who with a single look can shake the earth in its foundations, is thrown down in the dust and shamefully ill-treated ! Be astonished at so deep a humility on the part of GOD ! Not long ago we beheld Him on His knees before His Apostles, humbling Himself to wash their feet ; but herein His humiliation goes much further, since He is trampled under foot by His creatures, with less consideration than is shown to great criminals. Oh, how this great humility condemns our pride !

2. Resolve once more henceforth to labour to destroy that miserable pride of thine which governs thee ; and beholding thy God humbled, as it were, to nothing, learn to humble thyself to thy superiors and thy equals, and even to thine inferiors. Purpose to perform from this day some act of humility, especially by accepting uncomplainingly the humiliations which may befall thee. When GOD consented to be hum-

bled to the degree we have seen, would it not be strange if thou, who art a sinner and nothingness, shouldst refuse to walk in His steps? What is a Christian, if he labours not to become humble like his Master? And how wilt thou be humbled if thou accept not the humiliations which GOD sends thee?

Colloquy.—My abased SAVIOUR! I marvel with admiration at the example of deep humility which Thou vouchsafest to set before me. I desire, O my GOD, to walk in Thy steps; and since Thou wast treated in the most unworthy manner, I will learn of Thee to suffer contempt, wrongs, and ill-treatment, with resignation, and meekness, and even with joy. Glory, honour, and praise, justly belong to Thee; all creatures owe Thee reverence and veneration, and yet Thou sufferest them to trample on Thee! I, O God, deserve every kind of indignity for the sins which I have committed against Thee, and yet do I refuse to endure them! Do they excite my murmurings and complainings? Oh, let it be thus no more! I will henceforth accept all the humiliations it may please Thee to send me; yea, accept them in a spirit of penitence and satisfaction for my past sins. I will accept them as the chastisement which is so justly due to them. Let me be humbled, O my God, if it be Thy good pleasure; let me be despised and trampled under foot, I consent to all. Vouchsafe only to protect my weakness, and to give me strength to receive humiliations with calmness, and even with gladness, for the love of Thee. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON CONFORMITY TO THE WILL OF GOD.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. JESUS suffered Himself to be laden with chains, to teach thee that thou oughtest to bind thy own will and unite it to the will of the LORD. Know that the perfection of the love of GOD consists, not in doing great things, but in perfectly submitting thy will to His. The only end and desire of all the saints in their works was the fulfilment of the divine will. The blessed Henry Susone says: "I had rather be an earthworm with the will of GOD, than a seraph with my own will." To will all that GOD wills, to do all that GOD wills, and to suffer all that GOD wills, is the secret of holiness.

2. If GOD permits thee to suffer sickness, persecutions, injustice and poverty, submit thyself to His will. Since every day thou sayest to Him in thy prayers, "Thy will be done," let Him act according to the views of His wisdom. He is thy FATHER, and thou mayst be sure that nothing can befall thee that He permits not for thy greater good.

3. Thou sayest thou desirest health, because it will be easier to serve GOD with fervour. Well, seek to procure health by suitable remedies; for that is lawful. But if those remedies are without effect, maintain thyself in peace, murmur not, but adore the will of the LORD. Art thou unjustly persecuted, treated as an enemy? It is hard, I know; but nevertheless submit to the will of GOD, who for good reasons, whereof

thou art ignorant, suffers it to befall thee. Do continual temptations harass and deprive thee of all peace? Ask, if thou wilt, to be delivered from them; but nevertheless submit still to whatever the LORD shall see fit to do.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Thou bemoanest, it may be, thy state of poverty, and wouldest rather be rich! but what thou desirest is not always the best for thee. Be contented with what GOD wills thee to have and to be. Riches are accompanied with dangers, sorrows, and often with great sins. Since GOD has made thee poor, be contented to be poor; accept with courage the privations of thy position, and thy resignation will lay up for thee imperishable treasures in heaven.

2. To be always, and in everything submissive to the will of Heaven, is a proof of having already attained a certain degree of holiness. Nothing so closely unites man to GOD as perfect submission to His holy will.

3. Be then, henceforth, wholly resigned to that ever wise and ever paternal Divine will. In all circumstances, even the most afflictive, repeat incessantly, from the depth of thy heart, "LORD, may Thy holy Name be praised, and Thy will be done!" and thou wilt be the friend of GOD! thou wilt greatly advance in goodness, and wilt make sure thy eternal salvation.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. He who conforms himself in everything to the will of GOD, is truly happy on earth; willing all that

GOD wills, he is ever satisfied. Is he abased? he is willing to be so. Is he poor? he is willing. If there come cold, or heat, rain or wind, he exclaims : I desire this cold, or this heat, for it is the will of GOD. When he suffers a bereavement, a persecution, or a sickness : when death draws near, he says : I am willing to be afflicted, persecuted, diseased! I am ready to die,—because it is the will of GOD. It is not that he is insensible to what afflicts him and causes him to suffer ; but grace comes to help him ; it enlightens and strengthens him, so that he is maintained in deep peace, let happen what may.

2. I hear thee tell me, that thou wouldest willingly consent to receive with calmness all the crosses which come to thee direct from GOD—the most grievous bereavements, sufferings, and sicknesses—but that thou canst not endure the ill-treatment and the wrongs which come to thee from creatures. But knowest thou not that all here below comes from GOD,—prosperity and adversity, life and death? When any one wrongs thee in thy possessions or reputation, GOD certainly does not will the sin of him who wrongs thee, but He wills the loss of property or the humiliation which afflicts thee by that means, and it is He Who sends it to thee. Remember that the richest jewels which adorn the crowns of saints are made up of the tribulations they received from the hands of men, which they accepted as coming from the hand of GOD. Therefore, when men rob thee of property or reputation, treat thee with insult and injustice, and cause thee to suffer in any way whatever, look upon them as instruments of the will of GOD concerning

thee ; and say with holy Job, "The L ORD wills it ; I am willing : blessed be the Name of the L ORD."

3. Lastly, as thou canst do nothing without the help of Divine grace, do thou frequently beseech the L ORD to grant thee a full and entire conformity to His adorable will. If thou art resigned to the good will of God to the end of thy life, thou wilt have a holy death, and wilt leave to others a blessed certainty of thy salvation. Ask, then, for this conformity and resignation ; that it may render thee the imitator and friend of JESUS, thy Divine Master, and open to thee the gate of Heaven.

MEDITATION XIII.

THE APOSTLES TAKE FLIGHT AND FORSAKE JESUS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

WHEN the Apostles saw their Master bound like a malefactor, and led away with violence by the soldiers, instead of going with Him and comforting Him on the way, they shamefully fled, forsook Him in the midst of all His sorrows ; and for fear of drawing on themselves some disaster, from having been found with Him in the garden, they precipitately quitted His side, just as though He had been an unknown stranger to them.

1. Be astonished at the ingratitude of those disciples towards the Master from whom they had received so many benefits ; and see how great is their cowardice. They all said, when in the supper-room, that they

would perish rather than leave Him ; and yet behold them basely forsaking Him, when they see Him in the power of His enemies, and when they might perhaps have something to suffer for the love of Him Who, during the three years they dwelt in His society, ever showed Himself their most tender friend, admitted them to the knowledge of His divinity, and promised them an eternity of glory if they would persevere to the end in His service.

What a striking example of human frailty ! Who will dare to trust in his own resolution and strength when he sees the pillars of the Church shaken by the least gust of temptation ? The Apostles neglected to have recourse to prayer, and they yielded to sleep instead of secretly communing with GOD ; therefore, in the moment of peril they fled, and in the hour of temptation fell ! Who will dare to account himself stronger than they, if he neglects, like them, to pray ? O GOD, how weak is man when left to himself, and when not sustained by the strength of Thy arm ! Have pity on us, therefore, O LORD, and save us from our weakness.

2. Thou condemnest in thy heart the cowardice of the Apostles ; but hast thou not thyself often imitated their conduct ? How many graces and mercies hast thou not received from the LORD, from the first hour of thy existence ? What continual blessings ! the blessings of creation, redemption, and preservation ; the special blessings of health, talents, fortune, Christian education, good inspirations, and a thousand others thou knowest not of : all this GOD has done for thee. What hast thou done for Him ? Thou

hast repaid Him with monstrous ingratitude, with reiterated wrongs. He stretched forth His arms to thee, He called thee to His service, and thou didst turn away thine eyes ; or else, after often promising Him to be grateful and faithful, thou didst basely abandon Him every time thou hadst something to suffer for His love. Often, after some holy reading, after a touching sermon, after a Communion, thou hast made Him a thousand great protestations of attachment, and in the moment of temptation hast betrayed Him. Thou hast a thousand times said to Him, with assurance, that thou wouldest vigorously wage war with the enemy of thy soul ; but when in the presence of that enemy, hast thrown down thine arms, and hast yielded thyself up to him without even seeking to defend thyself. Oh, be confounded, and blush with shame, base and unfaithful soldier ! During ten, fifteen, twenty years thou hast not had the resolution to take a single step forward in the path of penitence and tribulation, in following JESUS CHRIST, thy head and thy pattern ; and yet thou dost not the less aspire to the honour of sitting one day with Him upon a throne of glory, in the heavenly country ! Thy pretensions are assuredly very bold, and thy hopes ill-grounded ; for how canst thou think that he who refuses to suffer with JESUS CHRIST on earth, should have a right to hope to share with Him the joys of heaven ? Can a soldier be crowned if he has not fought lawfully ?

3. Purpose, then, to be more resolute for the future in embracing the holy rigour of penitence, and to accompany our Divine Master to Calvary, and even to

death; in bearing for love to Him the sufferings, troubles, and tribulations which it may please Him to send thee. There is but one road to Heaven, the path of the cross and of sufferings. JESUS walked in it before thee, follow Him; and be assured that if thou sharest not His sorrows, thou wilt never share His glory.

4. Finally, make to the LORD the humble confession of thy weakness, acknowledge to Him all thy frailty, and beseech Him to clothe thee with strength and energy to fight against thy enemies, and always to conquer them.

Colloquy.—O my JESUS, who is more liberal than Thou when it is to do me good? No man in the world would be able to count the blessings wherewith Thou hast never ceased to load me hitherto, so numberless are they. I am filled with the gifts of Thy liberality, and I acknowledge that I have never responded to Thy goodness save by ingratitude. Scarcely, if ever, have I chosen to endure any restraint or inconvenience for love of Thee. I aspire to enjoy in Heaven the fruits of Thy holy Passion, and yet I do not consent to endure here a slight portion of the sufferings which Thou didst bear to merit for me eternal glory. I aspire to arrive at the sojourn of Thy blessedness, and I refuse to walk in the narrow way which Thou didst chalk out for me. Oh, I acknowledge that my pretensions, with such conduct, are bold and insensate. Grant me grace therefore always to accompany Thee in the paths of penitence and mortification; root out of my heart that cowardice and too great love of ease which prevent me from loving to suffer. And

as Thou makest my patience and resignation to glorify Thee, I will henceforth bear all to please Thee. Let Thy will be done in me in all things, O blessed JESUS, and I shall be satisfied. All my ambition is to cleave unto Thee through time and in eternity, because Thou art my Father, my Brother, my most tender Friend. Forgive me my past ingratitude, forget it ; and as Thou knowest how weak I am, give me strength never more to be guilty thereof. I am Thine, O most gracious JESUS, for ever. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Great was the grief which JESUS felt in the depth of His soul, when He beheld His own friends forsaking Him. We may believe that He was much more painfully affected by this cowardice of His Apostles, than by the blows and insults He received from His tormentors ; for it is a certain fact, that a wrong done by an ungrateful friend causes far more grief than the most unworthy treatment from an avowed enemy.

1. Know that thou by thy sins daily renewest that deep sorrow which the Apostles caused JESUS to feel by deserting Him. When God is offended by those who know Him not, or who have received from Him fewer benefits than the wrongs done against Him, it may in some degree be borne with ; but when these offences are committed by those whom He has laden with His mercies, He is greatly moved to sorrow, and complains of it by the mouth of the prophet. And how many precious gifts hast thou not received from His paternal hand ? Has He not always treated thee as His beloved child ? And hast thou not thousands

of times rejected Him? He had revealed to thee all the beauty of holiness, and thou hast not the less run after the deformity of vice. He had caused thee to taste the sweetness of the yoke of JESUS CHRIST, He had made thee to realize all the happiness which consists in belonging to Him, and yet thou hast gone away from Him, thou hast shamefully forsaken Him, in order to pursue vanity, or even to give thyself up to thy passions. Oh, if thou knewst how deeply God is affected by such ingratitude on thy part; if thou knewst all the sorrow He feels in seeing that with the opportunity of serving Him, with the facility of loving Him, with a thousand motives for unceasingly praising Him, and with infinite obligation to allure Him into thy heart and eagerly retain Him there, that thou nevertheless forsakest and deniest Him on the first occasion,—if thou knewst it, thine eyes would become two inexhaustible fountains of tears.

2. Delay then no longer to yield to the tender invitation of thy GOD: return to Him, cast thyself at His feet, and humbly ask forgiveness of JESUS CHRIST for having so ill responded to His goodness. Purpose never more to be estranged from Him, but to love Him, to follow Him, to accompany Him always in joy and in grief, in order one day to share with Him in Heaven the glory and happiness which are His.

Colloquy.—I ask Thy forgiveness, O my GOD, for all my past ingratitude, and for the grief I have caused Thee by committing so many horrible sins. Thy benefits, and the knowledge Thou hadst given me of Thy infinite graciousness, ought to have compelled me to abstain from everything displeasing to Thee; unhappy

pily, it was not thus I acted. I knew all the greatness of the evil which I committed in offending Thee, and withal I yielded to the irregularity of my passions. Thou hadst righteous cause, O good JESUS, to complain of me, and to account it strange, that after receiving from Thee a thousand precious tokens of mercy, I should have shamefully despised Thee, forsaken Thee, and even loaded Thee with wrongs. Oh, I repent with my whole heart, O my GOD, of so unworthy a conduct, and I beseech Thee to grant me forgiveness and mercy. I detest all my iniquities, because they have offended a GOD infinitely good, a GOD Whose bounty towards me has never known limits. I return to Thee entirely, and purpose never more to detach myself from Thy love. I love Thee, O my GOD, my Sovereign Benefactor; and for love of Thee I will accompany Thee to Calvary, carry my cross after Thee, suffer with Thee on earth, in order one day to attain to the happiness of loving Thee and of beholding Thee throughout eternity in Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Consider the rare example of patience which our LORD gives thee on this occasion. Weighed down though He was by the grief of seeing Himself forsaken by His dearest friends, He complained not of their conduct, He uttered no revengeful word, pronounced no threat against them. He was silent, and satisfied with groaning within Himself for their unfaithfulness.

1. Understand how little thou resemblest thy Divine Master, thou who art so easily hurt when thy ser-

vants, or children, or friends, or those to whom thou hast done some good, respond not to it as they should, and treat thee not with all the consideration and gratitude thou claimest as thy due. See how thou blamest at every turn, reprimandest them harshly, tauntest them even with thine own kindnesses, forgetting that to reproach a person with a kindness done to him changes the kindness into a wrong. Be humbled at having as yet learned nothing in the school of JESUS CHRIST, and of having as yet been a Christian only in name. Resolve to be henceforth gentle, affable, and full of kindness towards all thy fellow-creatures, whoever they may be. Be careful to show thyself always very kind and patient towards those who are ungrateful to thee, or who ill acknowledge thy benefits ; for it is as to GOD that thy services to them should be rendered, and not with a view to their affection and gratitude. To love another for the love of GOD, to render him every possible service, and to look for reward from GOD alone, is the way a Christian should act who desires to walk in the steps of His Divine Master, and to obtain Heaven.

2. Learn from the conduct of the Apostles on this occasion how little reliance is to be placed on the attachment of men, and on their warmest protestations. In prosperity they seem all devoted to our service ; but in the day of adversity they generally fail us. What vanity, then, is it to trust in their friendship ! what folly to be the slave of their favour ! what weakness to be disquieted by their coldness, or to complain of their unfaithfulness ! Men are changeable as a leaf ; their feelings vary from one hour to

another; GOD alone is ever the same. Therefore it is great wisdom and happiness to put one's whole confidence in Him, because He never forsakes those who belong to Him. Begin, then, from to-day to detach thyself from creatures, to give thy whole love to the Creator. He, at least, will come to thy help every day of thy life; at the hour of thy death, when all thy friends must needs fail thee, He will help thee, and will be thy consolation in Heaven through all eternity.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, every time that in future I may do any good to my neighbour, my intention is to act solely for love of Thee, and to obtain the glorious reward Thou dost promise to those who love their fellow-creatures, and do them good. It is in Thee alone, O my God, that I place my hope; and it matters little to me now whether men repay my benefits with gratitude or ingratitude. I confess I have been very wrong throughout the past, in being irritated, in complaining, because I saw myself ill-requited by those I had obliged; and in giving vent to words of contempt or vengeance towards them. I blush for not having yet learnt of Thee, O JESUS, to be kind and charitable towards the ungrateful. It is what I will be in future, in order to imitate Thy example, and to resemble Thee, Who notwithstanding all our ingratitude, hast granted us infinite mercies, even to the giving Thy life for our salvation. Now Thou art in Heaven, in the enjoyment of the recompense of Thy glorious charity. I hope one day to be there likewise, if I faithfully serve my neighbour for the love of Thee, and not on account of the human affection I bear to him, or any such motive. O my God, deign to reward me for the

little good I strive to do to him, by granting me Thy help during my life, by assisting me at the hour of my death, and by crowning me eternally in Heaven. It is there I look for the fulfilment of Thy goodness and Thy never-failing promises. Amen.

Resolutions.

TO BE FAITHFUL TO GOD EVEN IN ADVERSITY.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. There are a great number of Christians who are faithful to the LORD as long as they find sweetness and consolation in His service; but if some adversity happen to them, if they are tried by temptations of the devil, or by man's contempt, they are disquieted; and instead of cleaving more than ever to GOD, they throw down their arms and quit His service.

2. Perhaps these cowardly Christians imagined that, in giving themselves up to the LORD, they would have nothing more to suffer, and that their whole life would be spent in repose and happiness. It was a great error. The life of a Christian on earth is a continual warfare; and whoever will live faithful to his God, must expect tribulations of every kind. This earth is to us a battle-field, where each one is obliged to fight against his enemies, and to overcome them, if he will save his soul: we are not, then, here in a place of repose or security, but in a place of labour and fear; and it is necessary we have our weapons always in our hand, until we have gained the victory.

3. Show thyself, then, ever faithful to GOD in ad-

versity as in prosperity ; let thy greatest joy be to suffer here for love of Him. Thy sufferings will end with time, but thy reward will be eternal in the heavenly country. There will be ended persecutions, temptations, infirmities, weariness, and all the miseries of this life.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. When thy soul tastes the consolations which GOD at times sends to those who serve Him, it seems to thee that thou art able to undertake every thing for His glory. Thou comprehendest then how much He deserves to be loved ; and thou wouldest willingly say with S. Thomas, "Let us go and die with JESUS." Wherefore is it, then, when thou dost experience only dryness and barrenness, that thou becomest dejected, and forsakest the service of GOD, or at least that thou only servest Him coldly ? Oh, it is that thou lovest GOD for thyself alone, and because of the pleasure there is in loving Him, whereas thou oughtest to be attached to Him because of His infinite perfections.

2. Because it pleases the LORD to try thy courage and prove thy virtues by depriving thee of all consolation, is He the less thy GOD, thy LORD ? Does He the less deserve all the emotions of thy heart ? Is He the less beautiful because He veils His face from thee ? Is He less kind because He disguises the kindnesses He showers on thee ? Has He therefore lost His adorable perfections ? No, doubtless. Wherefore, then, dreamest thou of forsaking Him ? Wherefore wouldest thou cease to be faithful to Him ?

3. Cowardly soul, return then lovingly to thy GOD !

Love Him for Himself; love Him in spite of thy disgust, thy weariness, and thy inward trials. Love Him because He loves thee; and show thyself ever so eager to serve and please Him, that nothing on earth may shake in the least degree thy faithfulness towards Him.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Because thou art frequently and strongly tempted, shouldst thou lose courage, and think that all is lost? Nay, rather be firm. If, yielding to temptation, thou forsakes God, thou wilt eternally regret it; if thou resist, thou wilt experience unspeakable gladness. I know well there is hardship in fighting, but what happiness is there not in conquering? Courage, therefore! Be ever faithful to the Lord, and thy temptations, far from hurting thee, will give exercise to thy virtue; they will make known thy love, will bring thee to paradise, and will enrich thee with the infinite treasury of grace and glory.

2. After all, what fearest thou? Wherefore dreamest thou of turning back? Why wouldst thou forsake Jesus like the Apostles? Is not God with thee and for thee? Have confidence, thou art stronger than thy enemy; and he will not have power to overcome thee unless thou wilt be conquered. It is a chained dog, which cannot bite thee if thou takest care not to approach him. But, sayest thou, must I go on fighting thus all my life? And why not, if God requires it, and thy salvation depends on it? Does a good soldier ask leave to rest on the day of battle? Does he think of laying down his arms when he finds himself in the presence of the enemy? Go, and reckon on the help

of GOD : He has never forsaken His own in the moment of danger. The harder the conflict, the more glory thou wilt derive, and the more claim to eternal recompense. Yet a few days, and the hour of rest will have arrived ; yet a few struggles, and thou wilt receive the price of thy sorrows and toils. Oh, how wilt thou then rejoice in having been faithful to God unto the end !

3. Resolve therefore to-day, with decision, to belong to JESUS entirely and unreservedly, to follow Him faithfully to Calvary as well as to Tabor, and to be so much the more firm in His service as thou wilt meet with crosses and difficulties. Yes, belong ever to JESUS, even amidst grief, temptations, abasement, sorrow of heart, weariness of life, and JESUS will be thine throughout eternity.

MEDITATION XIV.

JESUS IS FIRST LED TO ANNAS, THEN INTO THE PRESENCE OF THE HIGH PRIEST, WHO INTERROGATES HIM UPON HIS DOCTRINE AND HIS DISCIPLES.

FIRST SUBJECT.

OUR Divine Master having been forsaken by His disciples, and loaded with chains like a malefactor, they dragged Him through the valley of Cedron by torch-light to the house of Annas, father-in-law to Caiaphas. Annas was at the head of the synagogue ; and though he no longer had the power of administering justice,

he desired, however, that JESUS should be brought into his presence. The soldiers took this opportunity of gratifying him; and to satisfy his curiosity, conducted their prisoner to him, loading Him with ill-usage of every kind.

1. Weigh well the cruelty of that furious soldiery, which could not be satisfied with tormenting its victim. Oh, how many blows and injuries did not the GOD of all majesty receive on that road, and even to the house of Annas! One spat in His Face, another pushed Him on with violence; this one struck Him, that one insulted Him; another uttered in His ears a thousand horrible blasphemies, and all outraged Him at their will.

2. JESUS maintained profound silence. He suffered all with unalterable calmness, offering His humiliations to GOD His FATHER; and thereby meriting for us the strength to suffer with patience for love of Him the ill-treatment of our fellow-creatures, and all the miseries of this land of exile.

3. Annas, satisfied with having seen JESUS, commanded that He should be led before the high priest Caiaphas. The soldiers, therefore, again laid hands on the person of the SAVIOUR, and led Him, amidst great tumult, through the streets of Jerusalem to the house of the high priest. Some days before that kind SAVIOUR had passed through the same streets amid the acclamations of the people, who loaded Him with honours and benedictions; and now behold the same people insult, outrage, load Him with iniquitous usage. Then it was the triumph of JESUS—to-day His imprisonment; then honours—now contempt: then the

cry, “Hosannah!”—to-day the cry, “Let Him die!” Learn from this the great inconstancy of men; to-day they are all on thy side, they call themselves thy friends, they sound thy praises, they exalt thee to the skies; to-morrow all will be changed. They will seem not to know thee, they will despise thee, they will drag thee in the mire, they will abase thee to hell. A thousand times insensate, then, is he who reckons on human affections, and who hopes to find therein true happiness or a firm stay; he will soon be undeceived.

4. Learn also from thence the vanity and nothingness of earthly honours. If thou art at times compelled to bear them, cleave not thereto with thy heart, and attach not thyself to them with a vain complacency; for they will soon pass away, and will be perhaps succeeded by strange humiliations. But if thou art deprived of them, do not seek them again, because they deserve not the trouble. Afar off they look brilliant and solid; but near they are but as a soap-bubble, which diverts us a moment, and suddenly vanishes.

Colloquy.—O GOD, infinitely patient, I thank Thee for having endured so many injuries and so much contempt for love of me, and to give me a perfect example of Christian patience and humility. I beseech Thee to grant me abundant grace wherewith to bear the wrongs and ill-treatment which I may receive, in order that, by my patience and gentleness, I may become in good earnest Thy disciple and true imitator. It is very shameful in me, O my GOD, to feel myself so prone to resentment and vengeance, when I behold Thee, Who didst not so much as open Thy mouth at

the moment when Thine enemies were loading Thee with insults, injuries, and blows. I forgive, for love of Thee, all those who may offend me; and I have, moreover, the intention to do them good when I shall be able. Grant me, above all, strength to be silent, and to repress every kind of complaint. Teach me, also, O LORD, never to place my confidence in the praises of men, or in earthly honours. I renounce both most willingly, in order to be pleasing to Thee. All I ask Thee, O my JESUS, is grace so to live, that at the terrible day of judgment I may receive from Thy Divine lips the praises which Thou wilt bestow on Thy faithful servants, and the glories of eternal beatitude. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Having arrived at the palace of Caiaphas, JESUS was introduced into the hall where that high priest was expecting Him with keen impatience. Around his throne were assembled the chief priests, all curious to have a close sight of the accused whom they were bringing forward, and determined beforehand to condemn Him to death. Nevertheless, Caia-phas, wishing to find in JESUS some ground of condemnation, began by questioning Him touching His doctrine. JESUS replied with heavenly simplicity, and with His eyes cast down in humility, "I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogues and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing. Why askest thou Me? ask them which heard Me what I have said unto them; behold they know what I said."

1. JESUS called as witnesses to His deeds and words the Jews, His enemies ; so conscious was He of having done nothing in the least degree worthy of blame ! But thou, couldst thou thus answer to all the words and actions of thy past life ? In the day of thine account, shalt thou be able to speak as spake JESUS CHRIST ; and call, not only thy guardian angel, but even the devils, to witness to the holiness of thy life ? Look into thy conscience, and reply. How many words hast thou given thyself licence to speak ! how many actions, perhaps committed daily, for which thou wouldst blush in the presence of the least of mankind ! Oh, if the stones and the elements had a tongue, how much evil could they not tell of thee ! Bewail thy past errors ; groan over all those works of darkness, to which thou hast given thyself up ; and resolve to live so holily for the future, that every one may behold thine actions, not only without being scandalised, but even so as to propose them as a pattern to Himself. He acts rightly who is able to do boldly before others without shame whatever he does in secret.

2. Remark, that at the moment when JESUS was brought into the presence of Caiaphas, the hall was already full of priests, of elders, and of scribes. At an hour so inconvenient (for it was about midnight), they were all on foot, gathered round their chief. If it had been in question to do good to some afflicted one, to watch by a dying sufferer, doubtless not one among them would have consented to leave the comforts of his home ; but to judge an unjustly betrayed man, to condemn an innocent man, to commit a horrible deicide, they were all up and on foot. Alas ! is it

not often thus with thee ! When it is in question to engage in a party of pleasure, and to do wrong and offend GOD, thou findest it easy to arouse thyself ; nothing is too hard or difficult. But, on the other hand, when thou must overcome thy evil inclinations, mortify thy passions, serve GOD, then thou art nothing but sloth, slowness and indifference. Abase thyself for so shameful a conduct ; ask forgiveness of the LORD, and do better for the future.

Colloquy.—O Eternal Judge of the living and the dead, be not extreme to mark the errors of my past life, for Thou wilt find them full of imperfections, miseries, and sins. When I seriously review them, I am seized with horror, and I dread the terrible punishment of Thy justice. I know that devils will accuse me of them before Thee, and will seek to make Thee condemn me. O my God, have pity on me ; for I repent of all my iniquities. I would, for the whole world, that I had never committed them. I desire to obtain pardon by a real grief, which I will strive to excite within myself, and by a sincere and humble confession. I resolve to do good works, that they may witness for me at Thy tribunal. May I obtain great mercy, that I may avoid evil, and become pleasing to GOD. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Caiaphas, not satisfied with interrogating JESUS as to His doctrine, questioned Him likewise respecting His disciples ; but our kind LORD, Who had consented to speak about Himself, would not open His lips about His disciples, that He might not expose

publicly their weakness, and frailty, and ingratitude toward Himself. He preferred to be silent respecting them, because He could not speak favourably of them, and that He must have spoken in their dispraise.

1. Learn how to be silent, when thou canst not possibly say any good of thy neighbour: there is nothing more opposed to the Spirit of GOD, than that licence we give ourselves in speaking of the faults of others. If thine eyes were open to thine own sins, thou wouldest not so easily see those of thy neighbour. Be occupied in seriously mourning over the disorders of thine own life, and thou wilt have no spare time for censuring those of others. See how thou actest towards thy neighbour; see how little thou defendest his reputation; how little thou knowest how to forbear speaking ill of him, though thou hast no cause. What do I say? thou even seekest occasions to lower him in the mind of others; it is for thee an amusement and pleasure to reveal his faults, and even to magnify them, in order thereby to diminish the esteem others entertain for him, without regard to the reputation of which thou deprivest him.

2. Learn from JESUS CHRIST to be prudent in thy speech when thy fellow-creatures are in question, and their reputation is at stake. Learn also from Him to cast the charitable veil of silence over those things which do them discredit, and which, if they became known might lessen the esteem they enjoy. Carefully avoid such unchristian company as that wherein the reputation of others is set at nought; and firmly resolve so to guard thy words, as to utter none which may be to the prejudice of others.

Colloquy.—HOLY SPIRIT, proceeding from the FATHER and the SON, my tongue soiled with the many sins of murmurings and slanders, I offer unto Thee. I pray Thee to purify it from all its foulness, by inspiring within me fervent acts of contrition and grief. I beseech Thee at the same time so to regulate henceforth all the motions of my tongue, that it may never again grievously fall into any sin which may wound my neighbour. I should seek to be kind towards every one in my words: Thou hast commanded it, and brotherly love requires it. Therefore I resolve to obey Thee, and to give way no more to detraction and evil speaking. Bless, O Spirit of Love, this resolution which I take, that I may no longer offend any one by harsh and bitter words, and that in all circumstances I may respect the reputation and good name of my neighbour. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON SLANDER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Nothing is more common in the world than slander; many regard it as a trifle, and scarcely feel any scruple about it; it is even treated as a game and amusement; and yet in its nature it is a serious sin, and only light when it is exercised on a slight matter. Now how many Christians are there not who strangely deceive themselves about this, and think that the slander they permit themselves is merely a slight thing, while GOD looks upon it as a mortal sin! Per-

haps thou art of this number; perhaps thou art thinking thyself safe in this respect, whilst in the sight of God thou art very guilty. Fathom thy conscience, and judge thyself impartially.

2. Slander is a very dangerous evil, in whatsoever light we may regard it. The slanderer inflicts three deep wounds with one stroke; he mortally wounds his own soul, by depriving her of the charity which is her life; he wounds him whom he slanders, by branding his reputation, and taking away, it may be, his charity, by the resentment he occasions him; and lastly, he wounds him who listens to him, by rendering him a sharer in his sin.

3. The HOLY SPIRIT compares the tongue of the slanderer to that of the serpent, whose bite is scarcely felt at the time, but of which the poison penetrates to the heart. Because thou handlest slander with wit, because thou dost insinuate it cleverly and ingeniously, imagine not that thou art guiltless—thou terribly deceivest thyself. Is the bite of a viper the less dangerous from its being concealed among flowers? Is the poison less poison because it is given to thee in a pleasant draught? It is thus with thy slanders; in vain are they agreeably worded, they are not the less slanders: indeed, it is a reason for their being the more cruel.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. The first and greatest good thy neighbour has, is his reputation; it is by it that he lives honourably in the opinion of those who know him; by it he attains to the possession of their esteem and confidence. He

has a right to preserve it therefore. But suppose he had deserved to lose it, yet thou hast no right to deprive him of it. What, wouldest thou shrink from robbing him of the smallest sum, and yet art thou not ashamed to deprive him by slander of a more precious possession than all his wealth? Thou wouldest recoil with horror from taking away his life; and yet dost thou take barbarous pleasure in killing his honour, which is dearer to him than his life? Oh, let it not be so for the future; but begin from to-day to respect the reputation of thy neighbour in all things, as thou wouldest that thine own should be respected.

2. Wouldest thou be less quick in distilling the venom of slander? Let thine eyes be more attentive to the finding out of thine own faults, than to the scrutinising of those of others. Esteem all thy brethren, and recollect that he who seems to thee to be vicious, is perhaps of more value in God's sight than thou; perhaps, through his penitence, he will one day deserve a higher place in the glory of heaven than thou wilt. Dost thou perchance think thyself a better man than him? Be sincere, and thou wilt confess that there is in thyself enough to employ and humble thee. Therefore leave alone the faults of others, and instead of making them the continual subject of thy malicious conversations, strive to correct what is evil in thyself: thou wilt in every way be the better for it.

3. Besides, what is more mean than slander? It is the fruit of the vilest passions joined to malignity of heart. We speak evil because we feel hatred, and slander is a means of revenging ourselves. We speak

evil because we are jealous ; and as the glory of our neighbour casts us into the shade, we are very glad to make it less bright. We speak evil because we have faults, and we seek to cover them by drawing people's notice to those of others. What meanness ! Wouldst thou dare to degrade thyself still by being guilty of it ?

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Nothing is easier than to slander, and the tongue readily lends itself thereto ; but is it as easy to repair a slander ? When one has been guilty of a theft, he can conceal his shame and save his honour by restitution by a third party who is prudent and discreet. But when it is in question to repair the reputation of our neighbour, the thing is much more difficult. He who did the wrong must repair it himself, and he can scarcely repair it without compromising his honour ; for he can only do it by retracting what he had said, and thereby acknowledging that he had been imprudent, or light, or ill-natured. Where is the Christian who has the strength to impose upon himself such a sacrifice ?

2. This reparation is nevertheless necessary, and all the powers of heaven and earth cannot release thee from making it. The Church has great power, but she cannot give thee dispensation from this obligation. The virtue of the sacraments is of great extent, but it does not extend to justify thee, if thou do not render justice to thy neighbour by repairing the wrong done him by thy slanders. It is a terrible, but a certain fact.

Oh, I beseech thee, delude not thyself on this

point. Examine thyself as to whether thou hast any slander to repair, and resolve, if such be the case, to fulfil the obligation as soon as possible. Resolve also so carefully to guard thy tongue, as that thou mayest never again unhappily wound thy neighbour in his reputation and his honour. It is JESUS CHRIST Himself Who requires it of thee; wouldest thou be so ungrateful as not to listen to His voice?

MEDITATION XV.

JESUS IS SMITTEN BY THE HANDS OF ONE OF THE SERVANTS OF THE HIGH PRIEST.

FIRST SUBJECT.

OUR Divine SAVIOUR had scarcely given the high priest the calm and prudent answer which we have related in the foregoing Meditation, when one of the servants who stood near JESUS struck Him rudely and cruelly.

1. Observe how ignominious was this blow to JESUS CHRIST. Can one pay a greater insult to a person of quality than to give him a blow? But JESUS is of infinite dignity, and He receives one at the hand of an infamous servant. He receives it in the midst of a numerous assembly composed of the priests and princes of the people. He receives it as a sign of chastisement, as though He had been guilty of a serious fault, and had failed in the respect which He owed to the high priest.

2. Observe, too, how unjust that blow was, since it was inflicted upon JESUS merely through violence and wrath. Besides, he who treated Him in so dis-honourable a manner was clothed with no authority, and his object was to render himself agreeable to the sovereign pontiff. But there is another circumstance which gives to this outrage a greater degree of malignity, and it is, that he who was guilty of it had been an object of the kindness of JESUS CHRIST; for some authors have thought that it was Malchus himself, whose ear Peter had cut off in the Garden of Olives, and whom JESUS had healed miraculously.

3. The brutal and ungrateful conduct of that servant fills thee with indignation, and justly. But how often hast thou not thyself smitten the face and mouth of JESUS CHRIST by refusing to hear His words, by resisting His inward inspirations, by despising the holy exhortations of His ministers, and the paternal advice which they have so often given thee from Him to alter thy conduct, to forsake thy sins, to do acts of penitence, and to lead a life holy, perfect and pleasing to GOD! How often, like Malchus, hast thou not outraged thy SAVIOUR to please thy friend, or to avoid displeasing such and such a person? Oh, give thyself up to grief, bemoan thyself, and humbly ask forgiveness of JESUS CHRIST for all the faults of that kind which thou hast committed; and while acknowledging that thou no longer deservest to be reckoned among the number of His servants, beseech Him to remember His ancient mercies, to receive thee again into His arms, and to continue graciously to treat thee as His beloved child.

Colloquy.—I cast myself at Thy feet, O persecuted JESUS, and I confess humbly before Thee that I have sinned by my fault, by my exceeding fault, in resisting Thy holy inspirations when Thou didst exhort me to forsake my evil life, and to be converted to Thee. I thank Thee, I bless Thee, I praise Thee for the immensity of light Thou hast lavished upon me to the end of inclining me to what is good. Increase it within me and strengthen it. Certainly I deserve not to receive it, because of the contempt and resistance I have opposed to it; but, O my GOD, remember Thine immense love and have pity on my miseries! It will be glorious in Thee to have had mercy upon a sinner like me, to have forgiven my sins, and to have given me back Thy friendship. Grant me this favour, O JESUS! I hope it from Thine infinite goodness. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Consider how patient and gentle was the reply which our LORD made to the miserable man who had shamefully smitten Him: “If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why smitest thou Me?”

1. It is related in Holy Scripture that the fire of Heaven fell several times upon the men who had been guilty of disrespect towards the prophet Elias; bears devoured forty children who had mocked the prophet Elisha; the earth swallowed up Dathan and Abiram, who had despised the authority of Moses: the arm of Jeroboam dried up when he stretched it out against the prophet. What, then, will be the punishment of the guilty hand which dared to offer the most cruel insult

to the GOD of prophets, the King of kings ! It might be expected that JESUS would at the moment have let an overwhelming vengeance break forth. But no : that good LORD, after receiving the ignominy, still maintained unalterable meekness. He suffered it with Divine patience ; and if He thought fit not to be silent, it was that it should not seem that He acknowledged by His silence to have deserved the unjust reproach by having shown contempt to the chief pontiff.

2. Learn from hence to endure an affront with meekness ; and if at times it be necessary to make a reply, do it without disquietude or violence. Remember that JESUS CHRIST, after being ignominiously smitten by a servant, showed not the least shadow of wrath, to teach thee that we must not return anger for anger. As fire is not extinguished by fire, so we cannot wash out an insult by an insult. Therefore, when thou art insulted by any one, be calm towards him, and thereby thou wilt cause him to return into himself, and review the excess he was guilty of ; thou wilt set him again in the right way, thou wilt smother every quarrel, every desire of revenge, and wilt perhaps contribute to the salvation of thy brother.

Colloquy.—O my SAVIOUR, how far I am from Thy Divine example ! Thou wouldest not revenge Thyself, Who hadst the power ; and I, who have not the power, am ever desiring to do so. But now I acknowledge my fault, and willingly renounce both. O my SAVIOUR, I well deserve to be despised and ill-treated by men, because I have had the insolence to despise and ill-treat Thee ! Yes, I deserve to be buffeted, who have so often raised my hand to strike Thee. Shut

my mouth, O JESUS! when I would complain of the ill-treatment I meet with; tie up my tongue when I would speak in the impulse of passion. Grant me grace to suffer all for the love of Thee, and never to revenge myself, except by conferring benefits. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Consider the injustice of the high priest and of his counsellors. When they saw a servant allowing himself to commit, in their presence, without reason or authority, a deep outrage upon an accused person, it was their duty to punish an action so mean, unjust, and barbarous; but obeying only the fury which animated them against their innocent victim, they chose not to address the least reprimand to the unworthy servant for what he had just presumed to do, and thus, by their silence approved his conduct.

1. It is thus we ever act, when we allow ourselves to be guided by any passion. We trample under foot the most sacred obligations of justice; we forget what we owe to GOD, to our neighbour, and to our own dignity; and provided we satisfy our passion, we despise all the rest. See, in fact, what Caiaphas and his agents did in this case; pride, jealousy, hatred, blinded them towards JESUS; and though they were convinced of His innocence, and though their conscience imposed on them the duty of openly proclaiming it and of acquitting Him, they preferred to stifle within themselves every sentiment of duty, rather than abstain from satiating their thirst for vengeance.

2. And thou, oh, how often, drawn on by a passion more or less strong, more or less guilty, hast thou

treated thy neighbour with injustice and harshness, and even with wrath! How often hast thou preferred the caprices of thy own will, or the foolish desires of thy imagination, to the commands of the **LORD**, and to the duties of thy state. How many times, yielding to the natural antipathy thou hast felt against such and such a person, hast thou made him feel thy dislike to him! be thou humbled at thy conduct so little Christian, and ask forgiveness of **God** for it.

3. Observe that no one took up the defence of our Divine Master when He received a blow from the hand of the high priest's servant, and that there was no man in the assembly who protested against such an outrage. He suffered it to be thus, to teach thee to suffer patiently the affronts which thou mayest receive, and not to be astonished, when those who ought naturally to protect thee are the first to act as if they did not know thee, and even sometimes to take part against thee. In these moments of agony put thy whole confidence in **God**, and be assured that He will know how to take up thy defence, if He judge it to be good for thy soul.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Who, in the midst of the insults wherewith Thou wast overwhelmed, receivedst no aid or sympathy from any one, grant me grace that I seek not alone in the attachment of my friends consolation for my sorrows, and a remedy for my griefs; but that I may wait chiefly upon Thy loving kindness for that perfection which I shall then need. Suffer me not to be irritated any more, as I have so often been in past times, by the injustice of others towards

me. I deserve, O my GOD, to be humbled and trampled upon, because I am but a vile sinner! I accept therefore, as coming from Thy hand, all shame of this kind which may be my lot. I submit to it in the spirit of penitence, and as reparation to Thy glory which I have so often wronged; and I beseech Thee to give me grace to suffer all with patience for the love of Thee. Amen.

Resolutions.

INJURIES AND AFFRONT'S ARE TO BE BORNE WITH PATIENCE.

1. Whoever thou art, and to whatsoever degree of holiness thou hast attained, expect to have to suffer often from the wicked. They will persecute thee openly or in secret, they will destroy thy reputation, they will perhaps load thee with insults and wrongs; for it was thus they treated JESUS CHRIST, and certainly thou canst not pretend to be better treated than He was.

2. Now what must thou do on these occasions? Complain? thou wouldst not be listened to. Be irritated? they would laugh at thee. Render evil for evil? thou wouldst then be no longer a Christian. What then? Suffer all patiently, after the example of thy Divine Master; pray for those who do thee evil, and revenge thyself on them only by doing them good.

3. Oh, what a beautiful sight is it to see a Christian maintain peace and calmness amidst injuries! It is the triumph of grace. Thus did JESUS CHRIST act at

the moment when a servant dared to give Him a blow in the presence of the high priest and his whole court ; thus shouldst thou too act, were a similar insult to be ever paid to thee. Be not troubled, or thrown into a passion, if thou art despised, insulted ; but keep a modest silence, crush at once within thy soul all desire of revenge, accept all in a spirit of penitence ; and so thou wilt edify those who are witnesses of thy moderation, thou wilt cause the angels in heaven to rejoice, and thou wilt make thyself worthy to be reckoned in the number of the true disciples of JESUS CHRIST.

MEDITATION XVI.

CAIAPHAS SEEKS A PLAUSIBLE PRETEXT FOR CONDEMNING JESUS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

CAIAPHAS and his agents, thirsting for the blood of JESUS, sought means to condemn Him to death. But His death alone did not suffice to them ; in their blind fury they would have Him condemned as an infamous criminal, and His having merited His death to be judicially acknowledged. They therefore engaged false witnesses from all parts, and gave them liberty to depose against the innocence of the SAVIOUR. They came in a great number. Each invented against Him some gross accusations ; they spared neither His doctrine nor His holiness : but their witness was mutually

contradictory, and appeared insufficient to proclaim Him guilty.

1. Be astonished at the extreme of degradation to which men fell, who, from their high position in Jewish society, ought to have preserved honourable sentiments, and in accordance with the dignities wherewith they were invested. The high priest and the chief men of the nation, had the commission of judges ; as such, they were obliged in conscience to protect the innocent, and yet they were the first to seek witnesses vile enough to be suborned, and falsely to accuse One Who was innocent, and in Whom no cause of accusation could be found. So strange a blindness is fearful ; but when one thinks of the jealous hatred which these same men had long nourished in their hearts against JESUS, wonder ceases. Men are capable of everything, when they suffer themselves to be guided by a violent passion ; and they even go the length of forgetting self-respect. The conduct of Caiaphas and of the elders of the people affords us herein a sad and memorable warning.

2. Oh, how many Christians among us resemble them ! Every day we have the sorrow of beholding a large number of men, honourable in many senses in the eyes of the world, who, as soon as JESUS and His religion are in question, become deplorably blind, and lose the wisdom which in all else is conspicuous in them. They will determinately find errors in JESUS and in His doctrine, and even go so far as openly to decry His holy religion. In reality they believe it, admire it, and like it ; but to practise it, they would have to renounce certain passions, of which they are

the shameful slaves ; they would have to repair this or that injustice, or restore this or that ill-gotten possession, and thereupon their courage fails ; and as they try to quiet themselves, notwithstanding the incessant demands of conscience, they grow stupified, close their eyes, and say, “ Religion is only in words ; its promises are deceitful, its threats are vain phantoms.” They seek for false witnesses against the Son of God, and they find them in the impious and immoral books which they feed upon. Their testimony satisfies not fully, it is true ; there remains ever at the bottom of the heart a terrible doubt, and a vague dread of the punishments of another life. But no matter : they go on : and soon death opens an awful chasm beneath their feet, into which they fall.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, suffer not such a misfortune to befall me ! Make me learn to know Thee and apply myself constantly to the study of Thy holy law. Thou art my LORD and my GOD : Thou hast Thyself preached the truths which the Catholic Church pro-pounds for my belief : Thou canst neither deceive Thyself nor teach me a lie. Oh, suffer not that passions should ever come to mar that simplicity of my faith, or darken its bright light in my soul. I believe, O my GOD, because Thou hast spoken ; and that Thy word is truth I believe, and I will live in such a manner as not to fear Thy judgments. Help me to remain constantly faithful to Thee, that through the whole course of my life I may say to Thee : “ O JESUS, I believe in Thee : I hope in Thee, I love Thee, and will love Thee throughout eternity !” Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

While the false witnesses invented against JESUS all the accusations which their caprice suggested to them, the gracious SAVIOUR, calm and quiet, with eyes meekly bent, maintained perfect silence.

1. JESUS heard quite well all the calumnies which were being uttered against Him, and felt in His heart a bitter sorrow for so much horrible deception. Yet He suffered all with invincible patience, praying for His enemies. He spoke not even one word, to teach us that it is useless to reply to evident calumnies ; that indifference confounds them better than replies ; that it is a great secret in the Christian life to know how to be silent when we are wrongfully accused, and that in those painful moments we should abandon the care of our defence to the providence of GOD.

2. Make a firm resolution to keep generous silence when thou seest thyself the mark of slander and calumny, unless the glory of GOD require that thou defend thyself. If thou break forth in complaints and reproaches, if thou inquire of every one as to who are the authors of the things said against thee, if thou use a number of arguments, to try and justify thyself, if thou accuse others to excuse thyself, believe it, thou wilt generally do thyself more harm than good. By making so much ado, thou publishest the calumny instead of stifling it ; whereas, if thou knewest how to be humbly silent, if thou hadst patience to wait for thy justification from GOD, thou wouldst see all the evil rumours which are spread against thee fall of

themselves, and die at thy feet without having succeeded in harming thee.

Colloquy.—When I behold, O my loving LORD, that Thou art exposed to calumny, although Thou art very innocence and holiness, have I a right to be surprised that, being a sinner, and imperfect as I am, men should permit themselves at times to speak ill of me, and even to calumniate me? No, doubtless; henceforth, then, I will suffer in silence their false accusations, in order to expiate the serious and multiplied sins which I have committed against Thee. I will make little account of the esteem of men, in order to merit from Thee by patience the grace of forgiveness, and a favourable judgment at the last day of my life. And if sometimes it seems that I ought to justify myself, cause me, O my GOD, to seek therein Thy glory alone, and at the same time to act only with calmness and moderation. Help me to imitate Thy meekness and humility in the midst of calumnies, and give me strength to bear them always in silence, in expiation of my iniquities, and with the intention of pleasing Thee. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Caiaphas, astonished at the silence of JESUS, and desiring, nevertheless, to find in His replies a means of accusing and condemning Him, thought of another expedient. He took a solemn tone of authority, and rising from his seat, said to the SAVIOUR, “I adjure Thee by the living GOD, that Thou tell me whether Thou be the CHRIST, the SON of GOD.” To this question, in reverence towards the holy name of GOD,

which that wicked judge had dared to invoke, JESUS replied, with calmness and dignity, "Thou hast said ; nevertheless, I say unto you, hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." Scarcely had He pronounced these words, when the high priest, feigning furious anger, rent his clothes, and exclaimed, "What need we further witness ? behold, now ye have heard His blasphemy, what think ye?" Then all those present in the Judgment-hall cried out with him, "He is guilty of death!"

1. Gather from what here passed at the tribunal of Caiaphas two important lessons. Learn, first, that in thy quality of disciple of JESUS CHRIST, thou must expect to be a mark for persecution and calumny. In vain shalt thou strive to render to each that which belongs to him ; in vain shalt thou avoid doing the least harm to any one ; in vain shalt thou labour to shed benefits around thee ; there will yet be found men who will hate thee, accuse thee, and condemn thee. They will even put on the mask of religion to judge thee ; and they will persecute thee under pretence that the glory of GOD requires it. It was thus they treated the SAVIOUR of the world ; it was thus thou wilt be treated thyself, because the disciple is not greater than his LORD. Be not, therefore, amazed at the ill-treatment of which thou mayest be the object, in spite of thine innocence. Rejoice at it, because it conforms thee to JESUS CHRIST. Bear it with calmness and patience ; and pray charitably for those who are the authors of it.

2. Learn, secondly, that the wiser way for thee is

generally to keep silence, when thou art the mark for any malicious accusations, whether true or false, if they are simply personal to thyself. Yet, as I have said above, if thy silence injured the glory of GOD, thou shouldst speak boldly, though always with prudence. It is so, too, when thy faith is in question. If thou art interrogated concerning thy faith, it is needful that thou speak clearly; else, by thy silence, thou wouldst be convicted of betraying it. JESUS well knew the use which would be made of His answer; He knew that death would be the consequence, and yet He spoke fearlessly, to make us understand that a Christian should make a profession of his faith, even at the peril of his life.

3. When the sentence of death had gone forth against JESUS, the judges withdrew to take some hours of repose; and the first dawn of day was fixed upon for the return of the assembly. Then was JESUS given up to the will of His guards, the soldiers and servants: they spat on His face; they loaded Him with gross insults; they blindfolded Him, and giving Him blows, said, in mockery, "Prophesy which is he that smote Thee!" These indignities were followed up throughout the night. But think not that those soldiers alone were guilty. Thou, even thyself, hast spit on the face of JESUS; not once only, but every time thou hast dared to offend Him in His sacred presence. Thou hast blindfolded JESUS, when in order to sin with the greater liberty, thou hast tried to forget that He sees thee. Thou hast oppressed Him with outrages when thou hast given thyself up without restraint to all the bad passions of

thy heart. Oh, how just it is that thou shouldst groan before Him, and ask His forgiveness for the ill-treatment thou hast so often heaped upon Him!

Colloquy.—O Divine JESUS, I own, to my great shame and confusion, that I have struck, insulted, outraged Thee, throughout my past life, by many serious sins of which I have been guilty; but to-day I repent of having so unworthily offended Thee, and I will henceforth labour with fresh ardour to repair all by my penitence. I accept, therefore, O GOD, for love of Thee, all the sorrows of this life, the calumnies and contempt of men, bodily sufferings and disease, griefs and agony of soul, and whatsoever afflictions Thou art pleased to send me. I have given myself up to Thee, O my loving Master. I will be faithful to Thee in life and in death. Grant me Thy grace, increase in me Thy love, sustain my weakness, and nothing in the world will be able to separate me from Thee. O JESUS, be Thou ever to me a father, a brother, a friend! Amen.

Resolutions.

OF EJACULATORY PRAYERS.

1. The prayers called *ejaculatory* are certain short aspirations, impulses of the heart, sighs of love, which we fling upwards, as it were, to the throne of God, to implore His aid and assistance, or to show Him reverence, love, and gratitude.

2. Ejaculatory prayers can be made at all times and in every place; while walking, reading, in the midst of the noisiest society, in every occupation. They pro-

duce a wholesome effect on the soul, refreshing and strengthening it.

3. The ancient religious persons of whom S. Augustine speaks, could not make long prayers, obliged as they were to procure their food by daily labour; but ejaculatory prayer took the place of others to them: and it may be said of them, that they prayed without ceasing, while ceasing not to labour. The aspiration they uttered the most frequently was, "Haste Thee, O GOD, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD!" It is drawn from the 70th Psalm, and the Church repeats it at the beginning of each of the daily offices.

4. The frequent use of ejaculatory prayer is exceedingly beneficial to souls which desire to live holily. These rapid and sweet aspirations unite them by degrees to GOD, in so close a manner, that they can part with Him no more, except with sorrow; they detach their minds from earthly things, and inspire them with affection for heavenly things. By their means, that spirit of devotion and recollection, which they gathered in the morning from mental prayer, is kept up throughout the day; even as when we have been thoroughly warmed at a good fire, we suffer no more from the cold, if we take care to draw near to it from time to time.

5. Moreover, who can tell how many graces they bring down from Heaven on souls which are faithful! Shot like a burning arrow, these holy aspirations penetrate into Heaven, and reach the throne of the ALMIGHTY, Who receives them mercifully, and fulfils them lovingly.

6. I cannot, then, too much exhort thee to familiarise thyself with so profitable an exercise, which is very preferable to the repetition of many other vocal prayers, the number of which may rather have for its effect to employ the lips, than to re-animate and enlighten the soul ; moreover, it is very easy, consisting, as I have said, in making short aspirations of the soul towards GOD, either to implore His help, or to tell Him that we love Him, and seek to comfort Him.

7. The most multiplied and engrossing occupations are quite compatible with this salutary practice. There is no need for this to leave our work : a few seconds given to it now and then are fully sufficient ; and this slight diversion, far from impeding the business we have in hand, can only be beneficial to it. The traveller who takes a little wine to strengthen his heart and refresh his thirsty mouth, although he may pause for a minute, delays not thereby his journey, but rather he takes in fresh strength to go on more vigorously ; and if he stop for a moment, it is but to walk on the faster.

8. To accustom thyself to ejaculatory prayers, make a resolution to raise thy heart to GOD every time the clock strikes. At each hour of the day, whatever be one's occupation, one should recollect oneself for an instant and then continue one's work.

9. For example, cast a rapid glance over the manner in which thou hast spent the hour just gone by. If thou have spent it well, bless the LORD for it, and say, "O JESUS, my Beloved and my God, I thank Thee for having enabled me to do any thing pleasing to Thee. I love Thee above all things, for the love of

Thyself, and because Thou art infinitely worthy of being loved." If, on the other hand, thou hast unhappily done any thing wrong, say, in the depth of thy soul, "O my JESUS, wherefore have I offended Thee! I repent of having done so; deign to forgive me. I detest my sin solely because it displeases Thee; help me to commit it no more."

10. Let every thing thou seest, and every circumstance of life, be an opportunity of lifting up thyself to GOD in some holy thought; for if misers are wont to make all, even the least things conducive to their gain, why shouldst thou not seek also to acquire in every possible way, even by the most insignificant means, an immense treasure for eternity? The more so that it will scarcely cost thee any thing, and that thou wilt thence acquire a habit of reflection which thou wilt often find very useful in the course of thy life.

11. If, for instance, thou see the wicked taking great trouble for this world, and to gratify their passion, pray for them; humble thyself in that thou dost so little for GOD and for thy salvation.

12. If thou hearest religion spoken against, or the virtue of those who are religious ridiculed, avail thyself of this circumstance to renew within thine own soul the firm resolution to die rather than forsake the service of the LORD. Bless GOD for having given thee grace to know all the blessedness of holiness, and how sweet it is to practise virtue.

13. Here are a few ejaculatory prayers, which may serve thee as a pattern. I have drawn them nearly all from Holy Scripture.

I. TO ASK OF GOD GRACE TO BE FAITHFUL TO HIS COMMANDMENTS.

1. Give me grace, O my GOD, to love Thy holy law, and to meditate thereon day and night!
2. Vouchsafe, O LORD, to confirm me in the fulfilment of Thy commandments, that I may obey Thee in all things!
3. My GOD, give me Thy grace, and I will fulfil Thy commandments at all times and for ever!
4. I would rather die at Thy feet, O JESUS, than ever consent to transgress Thy law by a wilful sin!

II. CONFIDENCE IN GOD.

1. How gracious Thou art, O LORD, to those who hope in Thee, and to the soul which seeks Thee!
2. In Thee have I placed all my trust: and if Thou shouldst indeed slay me, yet will I always continue to hope in Thee!
3. When I pass through the dark valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, because Thou art with me, O my GOD!
4. The LORD is with me, and I fear not mine enemies. O my GOD, how much better is it to trust in Thee than to confide in man: how much better to hope in Thee than to rely on the great and powerful of this world!
5. In Thee, O LORD, have I trusted; let me never be confounded.

III. LOVE OF GOD.

1. I love Thee, O LORD, Who art my strength, my

support, my refuge, and my Deliverer ! I love Thee with all my soul and with all my strength.

2. My God, I will love Thee much in this life, that I may love Thee much in the next !

3. I love Thee above all things, more than my life, more than myself ; and yet it is truth when I say I do not love Thee enough.

4. O GOD, my GOD, what shall I love if not Thee, my life, my love, my all !

5. O JESUS, Thou hast compelled me by many benefits to love Thee ; I will be Thine for ever.

6. Good JESUS, suffer not that I be ever separated from Thee.

7. Cause me, O GOD, to die in Thy love, Who hast vouchsafed to die for love of me !

8. Give me, O LORD, Thy love and Thy grace only, and I shall be rich enough !

IV. GRIEF FOR SINS COMMITTED.

1. Have mercy on me, O GOD, after Thy great goodness ; according to the multitude of Thy mercies do away mine offences !

2. Wash me throughly from my wickedness, and cleanse me from my sin.

3. Against Thee only have I sinned and done this evil in Thy sight. I was shapen in wickedness, and in sin hath my mother conceived me.

4. Turn Thy face from my sins ; make me a clean heart.

5. Oh, remember not the sins of my youth ! Blot out the sins which I have committed and have forgotten.

6. Behold my sorrow, O my GOD, and forgive my sins !

V. EJACULATORY PRAYERS ON DIVERS SUBJECTS.

1. My God, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy child ; too thankful shall I be to be admitted into the number of Thy servants !

2. LORD, may Thy will be done in all things, and not mine.

3. Gracious JESUS, if Thou wilt I should suffer, I give myself up wholly to Thee ; behold me in Thy hands, do with me what Thou wilt.

4. Give me grace never more to despise small faults.

MEDITATION XVII.

DENIAL OF S. PETER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

CONSIDER with attention the history of the lamentable fall of S. Peter. This first of the Apostles, who had followed our Divine LORD from afar, entered into the palace-hall of Caiaphas ; and it being cold, he went to sit down by a fire, which the soldiers had lighted in that court to warm themselves. A maid-servant came to him, and said, "Thou also wast with JESUS of Galilee." But he denied it before every one in these words : "Woman, I know Him not ; neither understand I what thou sayest." A moment after, another maid saw him, and said to those who were by, "This fellow was also with JESUS of Nazareth." Peter who

was frightened, denied it a second time; asserting, with an oath, that he knew not the Man.

About an hour after, several soldiers and servants of the high priest said to him: "Surely thou art one of them; for thou art a Galilean, and thy speech agreeth thereto." Peter denied it a third time, "and he began to curse and swear, saying, I know not this Man of whom ye speak."

1. Consider how great was the wrong which Peter, in this instance, inflicted on the heart of his Divine Master. Illuminated with light from above, he had been the first to confess the Divinity of JESUS CHRIST; not long before he had boasted of his unshaken faithfulness to his Master; he had assured Him he would even rather die than forsake Him. And lo! he forgot all these promises; and, at the voice of a woman and of a few soldiers, he denied Him basely,—not once only, but three times! Understand by this terrible fall, how little man should rely on his own strength, however virtuous he may be. See whether he can be secure against falling. Alas, who could have believed that an Apostle, brought up in the school of JESUS CHRIST, would have fallen so deeply! Peter was the most ardent and zealous of the twelve! In all cases he showed an invincible courage; he had been chosen by the SAVIOUR to be the head of His Church; and yet he fell in a fearful manner! Great God, what will become of the feeble reeds, when the cedars are so easily blown down!

2. Reflect upon thine own frailty, and tremble at the thought that it is far greater than thou imaginest. How often, indeed, hast thou promised God

and His ministers to offend Him no more! Hearing thee speak, one would lean upon thee, as upon a rock which nothing is able to shake; and yet thou hast hundreds of times fallen, and that after a slight temptation, under a small trial. Oh, acknowledge humbly thy great weakness; distrust the presumption which so often leads thee to expose thyself to occasions of sin; and whatever degree of love thou hast for JESUS CHRIST, fear to lose it.

3. Examine carefully the causes of the fall of S. Peter. The first was, that he would not believe the word of JESUS CHRIST, Who predicted to him his fall; and that he confided too much in his own strength. The second was, that he had grown cold in the love he bore to his Divine Master; he had become lukewarm; followed Him from afar only; had ended even by separating himself entirely from Him, and by mixing in the company of the wicked. The third was, his great presumption, which led him to expose himself to temptation and to the occasions of sin. Now, if thou enter seriously into thyself, and seek to know the causes of thy own falls, thou wilt find they are the same as those of S. Peter. First, thou beginnest with paying less attention to the charitable advice of those pious persons who perceive thy backsliding; thou becomest little by little unfaithful to the inspirations of grace; thou wilt not submit thy judgment to that of him who guides thy conscience; when he would warn thee of the spiritual dangers which thy soul runs into, thou esteemest not his advice, or else thou supposest that he magnifies the danger, and that thou canst act rightly notwithstanding what he says to thee. - Secondly, thou be-

comest insensibly slack in thy devotional exercises, and fulfillest them only with coldness and reluctance ; thou attendest the Sacraments less frequently, and with less preparation : and thou art mostly in the company of persons who are without fervour, who are worldly, light, and even dangerous.

Finally, thou reliest too much on thine own strength. It appears to thee that a few years, or even some months of faithfulness to GOD, are a sure guarantee of thy perseverance. Thou sayest that a person like thyself has nothing to fear under such and such circumstances, and so thou fallest deeply. Alas, thou hast perhaps already known it by sad experience ! Oh, how necessary it is then, for thee to live in perpetual fear, if thou wouldst have no deep falls to deplore ! Resolve firmly henceforth to follow thy Divine Master with ardour and fidelity, and to fly from coldness in His service, as thou wouldst fly from a pestilence, as also the company of cold and dissipated persons. Beseech JESUS CHRIST to grant thee grace never to presume on thy own strength, and to make thee understand that, without the help of His grace, thou art but a frail reed, which the least wind of temptation can break and lose for ever.

Colloquy.—O Almighty God, I am confounded in Thy Presence, and I blush at the thought of my great cowardice, and my frailness in the ways of holiness ! What shame that I have so often fallen back into my sins !—what grief that I have shown myself so inconstant in all the promises which I have so often made to Thee. Lend me the help of Thy Almighty Arm, O my GOD, and sustain my weakness by Thy grace ! Vouchsafe to make me perceive in time the occasions of sin

which I may meet with ; give me the prudence necessary for avoiding them, and firm courage to fly from them. Direct me by Thy holy aspirations, and vouchsafe at last to put an end to my falls into sin, which are, alas ! too frequent. Henceforth I will truly distrust myself, and no longer presume on my own strength. Yes, O my God, at Thy Feet I make the resolution to avoid resolutely all which might be to me an occasion of sin, and to persevere in the holy frequenting of the Sacraments. I purpose never more to omit any of my religious exercises, in order not to expose myself to fall into coldness, and from coldness into unfaithfulness in Thy service. Strengthen my good resolutions, and give me grace to put them always into practice. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

At the moment when S. Peter was so basely denying his SAVIOUR, the guards were conducting our LORD from the judgment-hall of Caiaphas, where He had just been examined, to another hall where He was to spend the remainder of the night in the custody of soldiers. The LORD JESUS, while passing through the court where that faithless disciple was sitting, heard the dreadful oaths with which he was denying Him. Oh, how deeply did He feel this wrong ! Nevertheless, He had compassion on his weakness, and turning towards him, cast upon him a look of tenderness which caused him to return to self-recollection, and discovered to him the horror of his sin.

1. Marvellest thou not at the greatness of the love of our LORD JESUS CHRIST, and at the extent of His

mercy? He was surrounded by enemies, reviled, spit upon, shamefully ill-treated, weighed down with weariness, sorrows, and torments, and yet He forgot not His Apostle. That ungrateful disciple had just deeply aggrieved Him by denying Him three several times; and lo! instead of reproaching him as he deserved, He looked upon him with tender affection, and gave him, through the efficacy of His grace, strength to rise again. Oh, how blessed is it, then, to serve so kind a Master! His love knows no limits; His mercy is infinite. When we are so ungrateful as to offend Him, He might deprive us of life, and plunge us into the everlasting gulf of hell; but He loves us, and proves to us His love by loading us with new graces to help us to return to Him in penitence, and to render us worthy of being still reckoned in the number of His cherished children. Very insensate, then, is he who loves not JESUS, who yields not up himself to His mercy, and who clings not to His service for ever.

2. Seeing the loving-kindness wherewith JESUS CHRIST bears the unfaithfulness of S. Peter, and the gentleness with which He recalls him to himself, learn the charity wherewith *thou* shouldst treat those over whom thou hast authority, when they fall into any fault. Dost thou not often reprove thine inferiors with harshness, and without indulgence, nay, with anger, if they have somewhat failed in their duties? Dost thou not judge with severity their slightest errors, condemn them unmercifully, and even punish them rigorously? Is it thus that a Christian should act towards his brethren when they have unhappily committed some fault? Oh, remember that thou art

thyself a sinner, and perhaps a great sinner, in the sight of GOD, and consequently needest indulgence ; and resolve to be no more so harsh and severe when thou mayest have cause to reprove in others the imperfections and miseries inherent in our poor nature. Remember that thou must show thyself so much the more merciful to thy inferiors the more they are guilty ; remembering that the best way to bring them back to GOD, and to replace them in the way of salvation, is to treat them with gentleness, to show them their faults with kindness, to spare their weakness, to excuse them charitably, and with tenderness to aid them to rise again. This example our LORD JESUS CHRIST left thee : fail not to imitate it.

Colloquy.—O God of love, give me grace to correct with wisdom and prudence the faults of my inferiors, whosoever duty obliges me to do so. I know, O God, that I must exercise brotherly correction with meekness and gentleness. I know that I must not be swayed by anger or excitement, but by true zeal for the good of those entrusted to me. Grant me, O God, for the attainment of this, sweet and gentle manners, in order that my counsels and corrections may never exasperate any one. Grant, that while I reprimand my inferiors, I may have no desire but that of doing them good. Lastly, vouchsafe to my words a strength full of meekness, that all things may concur to Thy glory, and to the spiritual advancement of the souls Thou lovest so ardently. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

S. Peter, beholding the look of his Divine Master

fixed upon him, recollected himself, and called to mind his sin ; and remembering how the LORD had foretold to him, that before the clock should crow twice he should have denied Him thrice, he hastened out of the vestibule, and wept bitterly.

1. Weigh well the confusion, anguish and regret which this unhappy Apostle felt after the commission of this grievous sin. How must he not have smitten upon his breast ! What floods of scalding tears must he not have shed while accusing and condemning himself ! “ Oh, most unworthy, oh, basest of men ! ” we may suppose he cried, “ where are thy promises ? where is thy courage ? How hast thou opened thy mouth to deny Him who had lavished on thee His tenderness ! He who had lovingly warned thee of thy fall ! Yes, life will be to me henceforth bitter, after thus wronging Him Who was my best friend.” But not satisfied with only mourning over his sin as soon as he had committed it, he bewailed it all the rest of his life. S. Clement of Alexandria, who had long lived with him, writes, that every time that penitent Apostle heard the cock crow, he would kneel down and ask of JESUS CHRIST the forgiveness of his unfaithfulness. What an example for thee, O poor sinner ! Thou hast often denied JESUS CHRIST by thy deeds, if not by thy words. His divine mercy has a thousand times called thee to penitence, and thou art deaf to His voice. Perhaps thou hast not shed yet a single tear over thy iniquities ; perhaps thy heart has not breathed one sigh of penitence. Is thy heart harder than a rock ? Weep, then, at length, O unhappy sinner that thou art ! and if thou canst not, seek

the LORD and ask of Him the gift of tears and of penitence. He will not refuse them to thee, thou knowest.

2. Observe the promptitude with which S. Peter rose again through penitence, since immediately after his fall he went out from the palace of Caiaphas in order to avoid further occasion of sin. Consider, too with what confidence he casts himself on the mercy of GOD, rejecting every thought of despair. If, therefore, thou shouldst ever unhappily fall into any great sin, learn from this example to return immediately to thy GOD ; to return into His favour through penitence ; to avoid occasions, and never to despair of the divine mercy, even were thy sins more in number than the sands of the sea, and more enormous than that of S. Peter.

Colloquy.—Most loving LORD, when wilt Thou vouchsafe to me grace like S. Peter to weep as I ought for my sins? Alas, have I not denied Thee more basely than S. Peter? Vouchsafe, then, to melt my heart with one glance of Thy love and mercy, that I may from the depth of my heart breathe forth sighs of grief, and worthily lament my sins! Yes, O my JESUS, vouchsafe to cast one of Thy gracious looks upon me, a poor sinner! Teach me to distrust my own weakness, and never to rely too much on my good resolutions, and to reckon alone on the help of Thy grace. Teach me to fly occasions of sin; and if I should be so unhappy as to fall, to rise again quickly and always to cast myself into the arms of Thy mercy. Amen.

Practical Considerations.

ON THE FALL AND PENITENCE OF S. PETER.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. S. Peter renounced his Master, who had preferred him before the other Apostles, and had made him first among them. He renounced Him after having made solemn protestations of never forsaking Him. He renounced Him as his God and Master, saying that he knew not the Man: he who had boasted of his courage and valour in the supper-room, renounced Him at the voice of a maid-servant. Three times he renounced Him, and that with oaths and horrible imprecations. Behold the progress of sin. Behold how from little sins one insensibly falls into greater. Compassionate this Apostle; marvel at his fall; examine into its causes.

2. S. Peter fell, because he had grown cold in the love he bore his Master; he had become lukewarm, and had followed Him only from afar. A lukewarm soul is not long without falling into great sins; for lukewarmness is a mixture of charity and selfishness, of grace and nature, of devotion and coldness, as lukewarm water is half hot and half cold. Now, contrary qualities cannot dwell together without destroying each other; selfishness increases in proportion as charity diminishes; therefore not to advance is to go back. Besides, the soul cannot live without consolation; if she is lukewarm, and receiving none from Heaven, she must seek it on earth; and as she has no more fervour, she commits many little sins which

prepare her for those that are deadly. Add to this that these unfaithfulnesses cause GOD to deprive her of many favours, and that the devil easily overcomes a weak and languishing enemy. Art thou not in that state? Is not that the cause of thy falls?

3. S. Peter fell because he leaned on his own strength too much. He knew not yet his need of grace; he knew not his extreme weakness; he was full of pride and presumption; he said in his fervour that nothing could shake him; he even preferred himself to the other Apostles, saying, that if they should all forsake Him, yet would not he. He was so full of confidence in himself, that even when his Master foretold to him that he would deny Him three times he could not believe it. He even asseverated that it would be otherwise, as if the SON of GOD could err, and be ignorant of his strength. Oh, how dangerous is it to rely on our own strength, and to confide in our own good resolutions! is it not the cause of thy falls? dost thou distrust thy own mind, heart, passions, and weakness? Hast thou recourse to GOD? prayest thou continually to Him to conduct and defend thee?

4. S. Peter fell, because he threw himself rashly into the occasion of sin. He entered into the house of Caiaphas, not to defend his Master, but to see what passed, and to hear what was said. He mixed among the soldiers, he warmed himself with them. He appeared intrepid, and the voice of one maid-servant frightened him, that of another made him tremble, and that of a soldier upset him, and caused him to deny his Master with oaths and imprecations.

Fly bad company, else thou wilt become wicked. What way is there of being chaste with the impure, sober with the intemperate, humble with the proud, devout with the impious? Thou art such as are those whom thou frequentest, or else thou wilt soon be so. Thou hast grace sufficient to withdraw from their company, but hast thou grace enough to remain therein safely?

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. S. Peter arose, because he had fallen through fear and weakness. He had not renounced his Master in his heart, but only with his lips. His apostasy was most criminal, but so far to be palliated in that it was in a moment of surprise and precipitation. He still loved his blessed Master, although fear outweighed love. The danger he was in of being seized and given up into the hands of the judges, prevented him from reflecting on his crime, or from hearing the cock crow, or from remembering what JESUS CHRIST had foretold to him. As soon as his sin came to his remembrance, he repented, and despaired not like Judas. This was the first cause of his conversion.

2. S. Peter arose, because JESUS looked upon him, and caused him to remember his sin, and opened his eyes to see his sin, and touched his heart that he might weep for it and be penitent. That look was a dart of love which pierced his heart, and caused streams of tears to flow from his eyes. It was a ray of light and grace, rendering visible to him the love and preference of JESUS towards him, the charitable warnings He had given him, the blessings He had bestowed upon him,

his own solemn protestations of never forsaking Him ; and, on the other side, it discovered to him his great ingratitude, unfaithfulness, treachery, and perfidy.

3. Alas, S. Peter renounced his Master once only, and wept all his life. How often hast thou betrayed, renounced Him, through fear, through human respect, passion, malice, indifference, knowing what thou didst, and being hindered by no ignorance ! And how often has He looked upon thee after thy sin ! how many preachers have raised their voices to point out its enormity ! and yet thou weepest not, and repentest not ! How often hast thou wept for thy sin, when JESUS has looked upon thee, and yet hast gone back with the soldiers, and hast denied, beaten, buffeted Him more cruelly than the Jews.

4. O ye Heavens, be astonished at this treachery and perfidy ! Who will give fountains of tears to my eyes to weep night and day for my sins and infidelities ! Oh, good JESUS, cast upon me one look of Thy mercy : I will be converted now and for ever. I will be penitent for the rest of my life. It is the effect of Thy grace : suffer me not to abuse it as heretofore.

MEDITATION XVIII.

A PUBLIC COUNCIL HELD BY THE JEWS AGAINST
JESUS ; DESPAIR AND PERDITION OF JUDAS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

THE LORD JESUS had spent the whole night in the midst of outrages, injuries, and torments, such as no

human tongue can describe. The morning being come, the elders of the people and the scribes assembled a second time in council, under the presidency of Caiaphas, in order to declare again the sentence of death which they had passed the preceding day upon the SAVIOUR, and to give to this sentence a judicial form which might impose upon the people. They therefore commanded JESUS to be brought back into their presence, and feigning a great desire to know the truth, they asked Him whether He still persevered in the reply He had given in the night, "Art Thou the CHRIST? tell us." JESUS replied, with majesty, "I am: hereafter shall ye see the Son of Man sit on the right hand of the power of GOD." Then said they all, "Art Thou, then, the SON OF GOD?" The SAVIOUR replied, "Ye say that I am."

1. Behold the malice and wickedness of the enemies of JESUS; they assembled in haste at early dawn, in great numbers. They are so excited by hatred towards One Who was innocent, that it was not possible for them to take any rest. Every delay thwarted their desires, and they seemed as if afraid the day would elude them. Yet it was about a sentence of death. Under circumstances such as those, one should judge maturely, condemn slowly, and delay for a while the execution of the sentence of condemnation; since, if the accused be guilty, the sentence can at any time be carried out; whereas if by too great haste one should be put to death an innocent man, his life cannot be restored to him. But the Jews put all such considerations aside. Their impetuous passions sought not justice; all it demanded was speedy satisfaction to

itself. On the same night they had taken an innocent man prisoner, and had already accused and condemned him. Oh, he is to be pitied who has ceased to listen to aught save the voice of his passions ; he tramples under foot the most sacred principles of religion and equity ; he falls head foremost into an abyss ; and though he foresees the agonising remorse which will torment him when he shall have satisfied his desires ; nothing stops him ; he blinds himself voluntarily, and, notwithstanding his intimate experience of the evil he commits, he chooses to ruin himself at any cost, and thus rushes forward to his ruin.

Oh, thou who meditatatest upon this, fear, above all, to be carried away by thy passions : make no compact with them ; beseech the **LORD** to deliver thee from the blindness which they occasion, if thou wilt not become their unhappy victim.

2. Cast thine eyes on JESUS, thus exposed to the fury of His enemies ; behold the deplorable condition to which their cruelty reduced Him. He was pale, livid, weighed down beneath the load of indignities which during the night He suffered. Standing in the midst of the council-hall, bound with a cord, in degradation, marvel thou at His calmness, patience, resignation to the will of God ! See how peacefully He awaited the sentence which was to doom Him to an ignominious death ! But He was innocent ; his conscience bore witness thereto, and thence He enjoyed deep peace and tranquillity.

What a lovely thing is the innocence of the soul ! He who possesses it, be he in the midst of an army of accusers, calumniating him to his ruin, possesses a

treasure beyond appreciation. The thought that God sees his soul, and is witness of his innocence, suffices for him, and consoles him for all besides. Ye Christian souls, who have preserved your baptismal innocence, or who, at least, have recovered it by sincere conversion and true penitence, preserve with care the treasure which is hidden within you. Ye will certainly have much to suffer in this valley of tears; ye will often be a mark for persecutions, outrages, contempt of the wicked; often ye will find your holiest actions, your purest intentions, judged and condemned against all justice. But have confidence. GOD sees you: He knows your desire to please Him, and as He is with you, who can hurt you? Take courage! lose all in the world—wealth, repose, parents, friends, life itself—rather than lose by a mortal sin the friendship of your GOD; suffer all, even martyrdom, rather than lose your innocence: for alas! in losing it ye would lose peace in this world and Paradise in the next, which would be the most fearful of all your sorrows.

3. Learn from the LORD JESUS CHRIST to be patient in all the trials which befall thee, and calm in the distresses of this life. Have thy heart set on being always pure and spotless in the eyes of God, on Whom depends thy happiness and thy misery in this life and the next; and be not disquieted when men accuse thee wrongfully, condemn, and despise thee; fear them not, for their judgment will not render thee less pleasing to the LORD, nor less worthy of His love. As long as thou remainest faithful to JESUS, men may do what they will, they cannot hurt thee.

Colloquy.—O gracious JESUS, how swift have I been

hitherto in offending Thee, but how idle and negligent when it was to serve Thee! Hasten not Thy retribution against me, O my GOD! and, notwithstanding my numerous sins, remember all the patience where-with Thou didst treat Thine enemies at the time of Thy Passion. Thou wast then overwhelmed with the most unworthy treatment, but Thou like a lamb full of meekness, didst keep silence. Bear with the same mercy all my ingratitude, and take not the revenge it deserves. Grant me, likewise, grace to suffer without complaining, the accusations others may bring against me. If I am guilty, I deserve their censure and humiliation; if I am innocent, I shall find a powerful motive of consolation in the thought that my innocence is known to Thee,—that Thou wilt be the decider of my eternity, and that on Thee depends my happiness for ever. Cause me, then, O LORD, to serve Thee with a constant faithfulness, and labour to be more and more pleasing unto Thee, that I may act only with the intention of fulfilling Thy holy will; and after that, may I in no wise trouble myself about the opinions and contempt of men. Thou alone, O my GOD! sufficest me: the rest is nothing without Thee. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Consider what took place in the hall of Caiaphas and the chief priests, when JESUS pronounced the calm and majestic reply we have just heard. As these unworthy magistrates only awaited His reply to condemn Him again, they cried out, as the day before, “ What need we any further witness, for we ourselves have heard of His own mouth? He has called Himself the

Son of God : a horrible blasphemy, which deserves death." And at the same time rising from their seats, they, with one accord, overpowered Him with blows with their feet and hands, and led Him to Pilate through the streets of Jerusalem, which were full of people, gathered together from every quarter of the town to see JESUS, and to enjoy the sight of a great criminal who was being led before His judges.

1. Be astonished at the sight of the blindness of these wretches, who, to satiate their hatred against a Man whose presence condemned their pride and all their vices, shrink not for a moment from giving Him up into the hands of a strange and heathen Judge, although well knowing Him to be innocent, in order to obtain against Him a sentence of death. To what an excess did their jealousy lead them! But therein they unconsciously were fulfilling the secret designs of the profound wisdom of the Most High : for as JESUS CHRIST died for all men, He would be thus outraged for all, and He permitted all, both Jews and Gentiles, to concur in His death.

2. Understand by this example how dangerous it is to yield to the mean and contemptible sentiments of jealousy and envy. Envy is a passion which cannot endure the brightness of virtue in a neighbour : it detests a man solely because he is good, judges him because he is happy and guiltless ; is afflicted at the prosperity of others, and rejoices in their affliction. Little by little this wretched passion degenerates into hatred, and frequently draws one into the most fearful disorders. Oh, then, fear envy. Tear up its smallest roots from thy heart. Be humble, and thou wilt never

be envious. Envy is the daughter and sister of pride. It is because we cannot bear an equal or a superior, that we are afflicted at the prosperity or the merit of others. Be humble, and thou wilt rejoice in seeing others more esteemed, more loved, more employed, more honoured, or richer or more virtuous, more holy and perfect than thyself. Be contented with being more humble than they, and thenceforth thou wilt rejoice in seeing them greater than thyself.

3. Consider all that thy Divine Master had to suffer for love of thee on the way from the palace of Caiaphas to the Judgment-hall of Pilate. See Him traversing the streets of Jerusalem! He has His hands bound behind His back ; a heavy chain weighs down His shoulders ; He is reviled, struck, and insulted in every manner by the same nation which lately had revered and blessed Him. Alas ! it was no longer JESUS teaching, expounding the law, casting out devils, healing sicknesses, raising the dead, whom they came to see. It was JESUS degraded, despised, accused, and condemned : JESUS opening not His mouth, motionless, defenceless. It was no longer a people hungering after the Word of GOD, glorifying Him, marvelling at Him with reverence ; it was a people drawn by curiosity, deluded by appearances ; a people who now saw in JESUS, a blasphemer instead of a prophet, a hypocrite instead of a saint, a man reprobated and forsaken by GOD instead of the SON of GOD. If among the people there were some few of an upright heart and a less superficial character, these saw in JESUS still a just man, but one who was unfortunate, weak, and powerless, given up to the fury of his enemies, and

unable to sustain himself. All Israel failed to discern the Messiah, their King and SAVIOUR, in the state of weakness and humiliation wherein they beheld Him ; the Apostles themselves ceased to hope in Him.

4. Lastly, consider another sort of humiliation to which JESUS condescended to submit at that time for thy sake. He was the GOD of glory—to Him alone appertained all honour and greatness—and behold He was presented before a heathen judge, as a man guilty of great crimes, and worthy of death ! Understand, if thou canst, the whole bitterness of this insult to His soul ; and recollecting thyself, be astonished that thou canst ever be proud and susceptible, so as not even to be able to bear a slight omission of respect, or a word somewhat offensive, even when spoken thoughtlessly and without ill-nature. Oh, thou art yet a poor imitator of JESUS CHRIST ! thou who wilt bear nothing from any one, and who shrinkest from the least of those humiliations which are inseparable from intercourse between men, even the best. Walk more faithfully, then, in future in the footsteps of thy Divine Master, after the example of so many saints, who, for love of Him and to attain heaven, consented to be ill-treated, despised, outraged by men on earth. Be no longer inwardly irritated when thou conceivest thyself less respectfully treated than is thy due ; and remember that having so often deserved by thy sins to be trampled under foot by devils in hell, there is no ill-treatment which thou shouldst not be ready to receive from thy fellow-creatures in expiation of thy sins, and in reparation of the offences thou hast so often committed against GOD. Be willing to be hum-

bled on earth in a spirit of penitence, and the LORD, in His mercy, will not fail to exalt thee one day in heaven.

Colloquy.—O God of eternal glory, Thou promisest endless happiness to those who for love of Thee endure humiliations and strive to mortify themselves. These Thy promises have inspired a countless multitude of saints with the desire to suffer great things for Thy glory. I also, O my God, desire to enter into heaven, and attain one day a like felicity with them ; I therefore resolve henceforth to bear the ill-treatment, contempt, and humiliation which may come to me from my fellow-creatures. Fill my soul with a great thirst for the glory and blessedness of Paradise, that, animated by the hope of one day possessing them, I may disdain earthly honours, to give my whole care to secure eternal glory. I love Thee, O God, Who rewardest with munificence the virtues, patience, and humility of Thy servants ! I love Thee, and am resolved to practise these virtues of patience and humility, because they honour Thee, and give me the confidence of possessing Thee one day in heaven. Bless my resolution, and come to the help of my weakness. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Nevertheless, the traitor Judas, hearing that JESUS was condemned to death, recollected himself, beheld the enormity of his crime ; and thinking it was without remedy, and that so great a sin could not be forgiven, he brought back the money to the chief priests, saying, to them, “ I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood ;” and going forth from the Temple in despair, he went and hanged himself on a tree, in such

a way that he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

1. In this circumstance, weigh well how great is Satan's craftiness in deceiving us. Previous to the sin, he neither allows us to see its enormity nor its maliciousness : he easily persuades us that it is but weakness and insignificance, a thing of no consequence, which very little can set to rights. But no sooner is the sin committed, than, changing his policy, he so magnifies it, and suggests such shame and confusion, that he throws the prisoner into despair. Learn from hence to be ever on the watch, lest the devil should deceive thee, as he has deceived so many others. Learn also to respond to the mercies of the LORD, and pray to Him graciously to sustain thee with His all-powerful Hand, that thou mayest never unhappily fall ; but yet, if that calamity befall thee, however enormous thy sin may be, however degrading thy fall may appear to thyself, beware of being dragged on to despair. Rather hasten at once to cast thyself into the arms of God's mercy, and be assured it will be ever inclined to receive thee, if thy heart be truly contrite and humble. Go ; after dishonouring God by thy sin, honour Him by confiding in Him. Go ; and though thou hast ceased to be as His child, He is not the less to thee a Father full of tenderness. Thou hast indeed been wicked ; but He is essentially and eternally good. Go, then, to Him, poor sinner ; for His arms are stretched forth to receive thee : go to Him with confidence and sorrow for thy sins, and He will forgive thee, and thou wilt be again His beloved child, the object of His tenderness.

2. Behold, how circumspectly thou must labour to the end for thy salvation ; since Judas, who was the Apostle of JESUS CHRIST, and so highly privileged as to have dwelt for a long time in His companionship and intimacy, was a reprobate. Serve the LORD, then, always with holy fear and trembling, and regard not thyself as secure of thy salvation, so long as thou hast not yet reached the gate of eternal blessedness.

3. Observe how great was the obstinacy and treachery of the Jews ; for neither the confession of Judas, who came to acknowledge to them his sin, nor his restitution of the money they had given him, nor the violent and judicial death of that wretched man, could avail to make them declare the innocence of JESUS CHRIST. On the contrary, more furious than ever, they pursued still more ardently their design of putting Him to death.

4. Beseech the LORD that He may never suffer thee to offend Him mortally ; but if, by a terrible effect of His justice, thou shouldst thus fall, implore of Him grace that thou remain not hardened in sin ; but that thou mayest arise quickly through penitence, return into His friendship, and persevere till death in the exercise of all virtues. To fall into sin is a great evil ; to persevere in sin is a still greater one ; but to grow hardened in sin, so as to cleave to it, at the risk of dying impenitent, is an evil to be wept for with tears of blood. May it never be thine !

Colloquy.—Sustain me, O my GOD, because I am weak. Give me Thy grace that I may not fall into sin. Alas ! if Thou deprive me of Thy powerful protection, I shall offend Thee ; and infinitely worse, shall

slumber in the mire of my iniquities. O my God, how great is my wickedness! How everything within me inclines to evil! I tremble when I reflect that all my past sins have merited to me hell; and that from one moment to another they may cast me there. In the midst of such fearful peril nothing in the world can comfort me, except the thought of Thy infinite mercy and boundless love. It is to that I flee; it is to that I appeal: and supplicate it for the continual gift of perseverance in good. Yes, O my God, I make this resolution unto Thee; knowing how weak I am, I will frequently implore Thy help, and beseech Thee to grant me Thy assistance. Forgive me all my past faults; sustain my present weakness; and give me grace to serve Thee henceforth with so much faithfulness, that I may die in Thy love, and have the happiness of one day loving Thee eternally in heaven. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON SPIRITUAL READING.

1. However large may be a fire, it will not fail to be extinguished, if care be not taken to throw wood on from time to time, to feed it. In like manner how well instructed soever we may be in the truths of our holy religion, we shall soon forget them almost entirely, if we do not keep them up in our minds by the reading of good books. Piety and the love of God are nourished by holy thoughts, and it is chiefly in spiritual reading that we imbibe these.

2. Spiritual reading has been always strongly re-

commended by the saints. The Apostle S. Paul exhorts his disciple Timothy never to omit it: "Give attendance to reading," &c. S. Gregory Nazianzen and S. John Chrysostom urged it unceasingly upon the faithful in their time; saying that it was like a mirror in which we see things clearly as they are, and wherein we learn to undeceive ourselves respecting the vanities of this world. S. Bernard, and many of God's saints, had the highest esteem for spiritual reading, and led all whom they directed to be constant to it.

3. For the greater portion of Christians, spiritual reading is perhaps still more useful than listening to sermons. It often happens that, after hearing a good sermon, the memory retains only a vague impression of it, so that in a few days it is effaced. Besides, we cannot hear a sermon every day; and often when there is one, we have not time to go to it. On the contrary, when we possess a few good books, we may read them as often as we wish, and when we wish, and so frequently, that it would be almost impossible to forget what we have read.

4. Adopt, then, the praiseworthy habit of never passing, if possible, a single day without some spiritual reading, of at least a quarter of an hour's duration. Thou wilt find in it a powerful means of advancement and perseverance in virtue. There are in heaven a great number of the blessed, who have owed their conversion and eternal salvation to the reading of a pious book. Thou canst, if thou wilt, do as they did, and attain to the same happiness; attend, therefore, to the following suggestions.

5. Read not from curiosity, to satisfy thy mind, but to learn thy duty. Before thou beginnest to read, raise thy heart towards GOD, to ask His light and grace.

6. Read with reverence, because it is GOD Who speaks to thee in the book. "When we pray," says S. Augustine, "we speak to our GOD; but when we read a holy book, it is GOD Who speaks to us."

7. Read with regularity, and go not perpetually from one book to another, or from the beginning at once to the end, or from the end to the beginning; else thy reading will be unprofitable.

8. Read one book at a time, and not a great many at once; for as it is not wholesome for the body to eat many different meats, so it is not profitable to the soul to read many books, without fixing the mind on any.

9. Read little at a time. The water which falls in torrents, penetrates not into the earth; whereas soft and gentle rain waters and fertilises it. So is it with spiritual reading; it waters our soul with heavenly graces, but only when it is pursued with calm slowness and pensive recollection. It is, therefore, an error to suppose that the more books we read, the more good we derive. The important thing is to read with attention. The drone flies eagerly through a multitude of flowers, enters one after another, and yet never succeeds in forming a single honeycomb. The bee, on the contrary, alights on fewer flowers; but she enters deeply into the calix, gathers up carefully the juice it contains, and thereof forms a palace of wax and a comb of delicious honey. Follow this ex-

ample. Confine thyself, at each spiritual reading, to a small number of pages ; strive to understand them well, and form from them some good resolution which may serve to make thee better.

MEDITATION XIX.

JESUS IS LED BEFORE PILATE.

FIRST SUBJECT.

IN giving up the LORD JESUS to Pilate, the elders of the Jewish nation had no other idea than the more completely to satiate their hatred. The last mode of death among the Romans was the cross : the slowest, the most cruel and degrading to which they condemned malefactors. And it was to this death that these infuriated men would condemn the SAVIOUR, because every other kind appeared to them too mild. With this intention, they led Him before the governor as a state criminal, Who called Himself the King of the Jews. But when they had reached the outer door of the judgment-hall, they entered no farther ; because, if they had gone within the dwelling of a heathen, they would have been defiled, as they thought, and could not have eaten the Passover. They therefore remained without, waiting for Pilate to come himself, and receive from their hands the captive Whom they had brought.

1. Measure, if thou canst, the whole extent of the affliction which then weighed on our Divine SAVIOUR.

From the moment that the soldiers had seized Him in the Garden of Olives up to this hour, He had been continually exposed to every kind of ill-treatment and wrong in succession without intermission or repose. This kind Master, Who was very Innocence, had not only borne blows, insults, false accusations, and the mockings of His enemies, throughout a whole night, but at daybreak He had been basely dragged along, like a malefactor guilty of death, before a judge, a stranger to His nation, who, through fear and weakness, and contrary to all justice, was about to condemn Him to a degrading death. Around him was an excited, fanatical mob, gathering from all parts of the town to insult Him ; an ungrateful people, who, forgetting the benefits which He had showered upon them during the three years of His apostolic career, united their sanguinary vociferations to those of the Chief Priests and Scribes and Pharisees. Oh, how cruel must have been the agonies which the heart of our Divine Master suffered under in these sorrows ! Reflect thereon for a few moments, and compassionate Him with thy whole heart. Thank thy LORD JESUS for having thus submitted Himself to so many griefs for thy salvation ; promise to love Him henceforth with an ever-increasing fervour ; and show Him, by the holiness of thy works, that thou belongest to Him, and wilt be ever His, unreservedly.

2. Observe in this place a striking instance of the inconsistencies into which a devotion which is merely external leads men, when it is destitute of morality and stained with superstition. The chief priests dared not enter into the governor's palace for fear of becom-

ing unclean, and of being unable to eat the Passover ; but yet they hesitate not to condemn an innocent person, and put Him to an ignominious death. They scruple about a legal impurity, but have no remorse for an atrocious crime. Oh, how many bad Christians are there who resemble them ! How many who make their religion consist in some external practices, often minute and vain, which they would not omit for any thing in the world, and who find no difficulty in breaking the laws of God and the Church ! and withal, they believe themselves in the right path, and profess to be fulfilling their religious duties, and feel no cause for self-reproach, and conceive that no one has a right to expect more from them.

3. Art thou not, unhappily, of the number of these blind Christians ? Art thou not satisfied with fulfilling certain external practices of religion which are agreeable to thee and fall in mostly with thy inclination ? Thou attendest the divine services on Sunday, thou readest some pious book daily, sayest thy prayers, and givest alms, &c. ; but withal thy conscience upbraids thee not for omitting Communion from year to year ; thou hurtest thy neighbour's feelings by thy words, and destroyest his reputation by thy detractions, bitter tale-bearings, and even calumnies ; thou heedest not the Church's rules of fasting and abstinence, &c. And is it thus thou thinkest to honour God, thus to secure thy salvation ? Oh, thou art grievously mistaken ! Know this well,—it is the Apostle S. James who warns thee thereof,—if thou fail to fulfil the law of God in one point, it is as if thou shouldst fail in all. God will not give thee heaven for having done this or that good

work, but for having fulfilled His whole law. He esteems not worthy of eternal life those Christians who merely obey His commandments in those things which please them or cost them little, but those who do themselves perpetual violence in order to obey Him in all things.

Colloquy.—O gracious JESUS! Who hast consented to suffer for love of me so many insults, wrongs, calumnies, and indignities in the course of Thy Passion, how should I have a heart so hard as to refuse to love Thee! No, LORD, it cannot be; I cast myself at Thy Feet, I adore Thee as my God and SAVIOUR, and I cling to Thee ever as my best Friend! To prove to Thee my love and my gratitude, I firmly resolve to suffer all, and to die rather than disobey in any way a single point of Thy holy law. Help me with Thy grace, and sustain my tottering steps in the paths of Thy commandments. Suffer me not to limit my religion to a few practices, good in themselves, but insufficient for salvation. To be faithful to Thy law, and Thy whole law, at whatever cost is, O GOD! that which I desire to be to my latest breath. Come to my help, O JESUS! give efficacy to my good resolutions, that I may be Thine to-day and for ever. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Pilate, in a praiseworthy compliance with the scruples of the Jews, came forth from his palace and went to meet them. “What accusation,” said he, “bring ye against this Man?” It was not an easy thing to find a subject of plausible accusation against the King of Saints. The Jews had hoped that Pilate would

condemn Him upon their simple denunciation, without requiring them to particularise the crimes or produce the proofs. Deceived in their expectation, they replied with sharpness and arrogance, "If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him unto thee." Pilate was not satisfied with this vague accusation, and urged the Jews to specify clearly the complaints they had to bring against JESUS CHRIST. Then they replied, "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying, that He Himself is CHRIST, a king."

1. Observe how false were the accusations brought against JESUS. They accused Him of being a turbulent and seditious man, and of seducing the Jewish nation to revolt; and yet it was of public evidence, that, during the three years of His apostolic life, He had zealously preached submission to the ordained authorities, together with subordination, humility, peace, and love of our enemies. He was likewise accused of having dissuaded men from paying tribute to Cæsar, —a grievous lie, inasmuch as He had even performed a miracle to enable Himself to pay tribute for Himself and for S. Peter; and that He had upon one occasion replied to some who thus accused Him, "Render unto Cæsar the things which be Cæsar's." Finally, they accused Him of having aspired to royalty, and given Himself the title of King. This was likewise a calumny, for when in Galilee the people wished one day to make Him a king, He quietly eluded their eagerness and retired to the wilderness. It is thus that too often, in this land of exile, the wicked falsely accuse the righteous and the servants of GOD. They spy out

their words and ways : they attribute evil intentions to their best actions. They slander them ; they tear their reputation to pieces, drag it through the mire, and seek to destroy it. Oh, disciple of JESUS CHRIST, be not astonished at being treated like thy Master, but rather rejoice. Live ever in such a way that thy conscience may not reproach thee with any heavy sin before GOD ; and then the more the wicked strive to blacken thee, the more pleasing thou wilt be in the sight of the LORD. Love the abjection to which they condemn thee, accept it willingly, with the intention of expiating thy pride, and be assured that thy patience shall be fully recompensed in Heaven.

2. We cannot but loathe the profound wickedness of those Jews who, convinced of the innocence of the SAVIOUR, nevertheless sought every possible means of making Him pass for guilty. Thou, too, condemnest it in thy heart. But say, hast thou never imitated their conduct ? Hast thou never, through hatred or jealousy, falsely accused thy neighbour ? Canst thou say truly that no slander has ever escaped thy lips ? Slander ! that is a sin of so detestable a nature, that he who is guilty of it dares not acknowledge its guilt to himself ; and yet it is a common thing in the world. It destroys in a moment the best and most unblemished reputations ; it prefers to attack whatever is most pure, most virtuous, most holy, and thereby causes the weak to be offended, and religion to be blasphemed. Yet, again, hast thou never been guilty thereof ? Answer ; alas, thy conscience perhaps accuses thee of many slanders, the remembrance of which thou hast striven to stifle ! Well, weep for them ; repent of

them, and labour henceforth prudently to repair the evil they may have occasioned.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Who didst consent to be weighed down beneath the burden of black calumnies, and Who didst nevertheless resist them by violence alone, teach me to imitate Thy holy example! If I should be at any time myself an object of the calumnies of the wicked, grant, O LORD, that, amid their untrue accusations, I may maintain my soul in calm and peace. Be far from me useless complainings, words of contempt, and desires of revenge. I will suffer all things for love of Thee, and for the conversion of those who accuse me. Alas, O my SAVIOUR, I have formerly been wicked enough myself to calumniate my neighbour! Forgive me those serious sins of which I repent, and which I will no more commit. Give me strength and opportunity to repair them: so that when I shall appear before Thee to be judged, I may have nothing wherewith to reproach myself, and may receive from Thy hand the crown of glory which Thou wilt give to penitence and repentance. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Pilate as a wise man, saw at once that the accusations of the Jews were vague and destitute of proofs and that no witnesses were produced. But as they certified that JESUS had called Himself a king, he wished to examine into this last point. He went back therefore into the judgment-hall; and summoning JESUS before him, he asked Him if He were really the King of the Jews. “JESUS answered, My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world,

then would My servants fight ; but now is My kingdom not from hence."

1. *My kingdom is not of this world.*—The grandeurs, the riches, the kingdoms of this world have but a time, and vanish with fearful rapidity ; but the kingdom of JESUS CHRIST will have eternity for its duration. O Christian, thou who lovest thy GOD, who servest Him faithfully, how many reasons hast thou not for detaching thyself from all the things of earth, and for sighing only for the solid blessings which GOD reserves for thee in Heaven ! Wouldst thou not be most blind and foolish in setting thy thoughts and affections in the honours and riches which the world offers thee, when thou knowest that all these false blessings vanish like smoke, and flee away like a vain shadow ? Oh, do better ! Strive by the holiness of thy life to gain eternal riches, and by many years of labour seek for a repose which will have no end. And if thou seest the enemies of GOD prospering in their affairs, succeeding in all their undertakings, accumulating to themselves honours, dignities, and distinctions, be not cast down ; but raising thy eyes towards Heaven, say to thyself, "My kingdom is not of this world ;" it is not here I would look for distinctions, glory, and peace, but in the abode of the blessed : and be convinced that this thought will console thy heart infinitely more than all the good things of this world could afford it real happiness.

2. *My kingdom is not of this world.*—These words, spoken by the SAVIOUR's lips some hours before His death, have been receiving a new ratification daily for more than eighteen hundred years. JESUS is the

King of kings ! and yet He is unknown, despised, persecuted by a great number of those for whom He willed to expire on a cross. For these eighteen hundred years His religion, His ministers, His servants have been the objects of the hatred, scorn, and persecutions of the world. It is often enough to belong to JESUS to be the object of the ridicule of the wicked. O my GOD, art Thou, then, no more the Sovereign LORD of all that exists ? Forsakest Thou those who are faithful to Thee ? No, no. The LORD often leaves His own people to bend beneath the weight of the tribulations of this life ; but He sustains them by the sweetness and the strength of His grace. Thereby He breaks all the bonds which bind them to this land of exile. He raises their thoughts and their hopes heavenwards, and thus opens to them the entrance of that glorious Kingdom, where a throne shall be the reward of their courage and their sufferings.

Colloquy.—O Kingdom of JESUS CHRIST ! Kingdom where, in the company of angels, and in the presence of GOD Himself, will shine patriarchs, prophets, virgins, martyrs, all saints, and Mary, His own mother ! Kingdom whither I am myself invited to come, and whereunto I shall certainly attain if I persevere to the end in the holy love of GOD ! O Kingdom of eternity, be ever present to my remembrance ! In the midst of my sorrows, trials, conflicts, and all crosses, let me cry : “ Courage, my soul ; the Kingdom of thy JESUS is not of this world. Go forward ; thy tribulations will have an end, thy tears will cease to flow ; thou wilt soon reach the end of thy conflict. Beautiful will be thy reward ! Thou wilt receive an immortal crown

in the kingdom of God!" Blessed JESUS, I am not worthy of that crown. I have done nothing yet to deserve it; but I trust in Thy mercies, and presume to ask Thee for it. Grant me the grace to serve Thee all the days of my life with an ever-increasing ardour, faithfulness, and filial fear. Bless the little I can do for Thy glory; sustain me in the hour of my death; and at last, when I shall come before Thee to abide my judgment, receive me into Thine eternal Tabernacles! Amen.

Resolutions.

SOME SUGGESTIONS AS TO THE MANNER OF CONQUERING SINS.

I. USEFULNESS OF FREQUENT CONFESSiON TO GOD.

1. Confession is one of the most consolatory exercises of our holy religion, and one of the most efficacious means whereby to justify poor sinners who wish to turn to GOD, to encourage and strengthen souls who are still weak in His service, and to lead on stronger souls to a high degree of perfection. "If we confess our sins, GOD is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."

2. Frequently to practise this duty has always been approved, practised, and recommended by GOD's saints.

II. WHAT WE SHOULD DO.

3. Every time thou confessest thy sin to thy Maker, be attentive to the four following rules:
1. Examine thyself carefully. 2. Excite thyself to

contrition for thy sins, and to good resolutions, and ask GOD humbly for both. 3. Confess with sincerity and simplicity of heart. 4. After confession, make some amends without delay or omission.

III. EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE.

4. Examination of conscience should be performed with care and attention, but without scruple. More or less time should be given to it, according as we are in this habit; but a quarter of an hour's self-examination is quite enough for those who do so frequently; if they have committed some very great sin, it will present itself readily to their remembrance. Besides, it should never be entered upon without their having first asked fervently for the light of the HOLY SPIRIT.

5. To strive, in self-examination, to remember every thing; the smallest venial fault to which human frailty is liable is an error. The multitude of our failings is infinite, and all our diligence will never enable us to discover more than a small portion of them. We need not prick and torment our poor hearts thus. When we have sufficiently looked into our sins, let us stop there, and repose ourselves, and the whole amount thereof, on the infinite mercy of JESUS CHRIST.

IV. CONTRITION.

6. Contrition is absolutely necessary to a good confession. It is possible in some cases to receive the forgiveness of our sins without self-examination and confession; but never without contrition. Confession without contrition is an illusion or a sacrilege. Think seriously of this.

7. A person who had outwardly led a very edifying life, said to his spiritual guide; "That which frightens me most at this moment is, that I have very often confessed from habit, and without sorrow for my sins." Alas, how many Christians are there who might indeed hold the same language! Art thou perchance of the number?

8. The more contrition thou hast in confessing thy sins, the more perfect will thy confessions be. Excite it, then, diligently in thy heart, and above all, ask it of GOD, who alone can give it thee.

9. Detest thy sins because they offend a GOD Who is infinitely gracious, and infinitely worthy of all the homage of thy heart.

10. Detest thy sins, because they wrong a GOD Who is infinitely good, a GOD Who loves thee as a father, Who has never done thee harm, but Who rather has always loaded thee with blessings. It was once asked of a holy person, why the remembrance of her sins, which had been already forgiven, still caused her so much sorrow. "Alas," replied she weeping, "they wounded the heart of my Father and Best Friend. Oh, how painful it is to me to remember that there was a time when I responded to the love of my GOD by offences and ingratitude! I shall never be consoled till I am with Him in Heaven, and when He shall Himself have given me the assurance that all is forgotten."

11. Detest thy sins, because they occasioned the Passion and Death of our LORD JESUS CHRIST. If thou hast had the unhappiness to commit a great sin, it is a matter of faith that, by thy sin, thou hast cru-

cified anew thy gracious SAVIOUR. It was thou that didst betray, scourge, crown Him with thorns, nail Him to the cross, and lastly, pierce His Heart. And if thou have committed a hundred sins, thou hast thereby renewed a hundred times the sorrowful Passion of JESUS. Oh, what cause for bitter tears! It is related, every time that Francis of Assisi meditated on the Passion, he felt such acute grief for his sins, that he burst into sobs, and shed floods of tears. In casting his eyes upon CHRIST crucified, he would cry, "O good and most gracious JESUS! it was my sins which crucified Thee." Sometimes the violence of his grief and love were such, that it caused him to fall senseless, so that his brethren were obliged to support him in their arms.

12. Detest thy sins, because they cover thy soul with a hideous leprosy, and render it an object of horror in the sight of GOD. If thou hadst faith, how powerful would that consideration be to thee! It has been said that GOD has showed to many saints, in mental prayer, the state of a soul in mortal sin; and they have assured us that they would have died of terror, unless a special degree of grace had given them strength to endure such a spectacle. A soul in mortal sin is a thousand times more hideous than a corpse in putrefaction. Fear, then, to commit sin; detest it if thou have committed it, in order to obtain forgiveness. Violent threats were once held out to S. John Chrysostom, on the part of the empress, for refusing a thing which was unjust. "Go and tell the empress," said the holy Archbishop, "that Chrysostom fears but one thing, and that is to stain his soul

with sin." Oh, how happy should we be if we felt likewise! At least let us excite these feelings in our soul, and then let us preserve them to our last breath.

13. Detest thy sins, because they would deprive thee of the happiness of seeing and loving GOD in Heaven. The mother of the Maccabees, in order to encourage one of her sons to die nobly rather than offend GOD, said to him, "My son, look up to Heaven;" and I likewise, to encourage thee to detest thy sins above all things, do cry to thee, "Look up to Heaven." That glorious Heaven will be thine for ever, if thou abhor thy sins; otherwise thou wilt for ever lose it. Choose, therefore.

14. Detest thy sins because they deserve hell. Oh, what is hell? We will not put ourselves to the pain of meditating on the fearful torments which the lost suffer there. We would fain forget that there is a hell, and the saints could only think thereof in trembling! Peter Damian confesses that the blood froze in his veins at the mere thought of the eternity of woe. S. Bernard said, "I tremble and am beside myself when I think of hell." It is thus that the saints trembled, and shouldst thou not tremble? Oh, think of hell; and this thought will inspire in thee a holy, a salutary horror of thy sins. When thou preparest thyself, place thyself in imagination in some spot in hell, in the midst of devils and lost souls, and say to thyself, "This is the place which my sins have caused me to deserve," and soon, with the grace of GOD, thou wilt feel arising in thy soul a hatred of sin, grief at having committed it so often, and a firm resolution to die rather than commit it again.

15. Detest not only all thy great sins, but likewise all thy little faults. Say not, "These are but little sins," for such language is unworthy of a soul which loves God. Little sins are an evil, an infinite evil, because they offend a God of infinite goodness, and because nothing short of His infinite merits can wash them out. And even were little sins slight things, thou shouldst detest them, inasmuch as they displease God.

16. To sum up, never fail to excite in thy soul a sincere contrition for all thy sins, great and small, and cherish a very decided determination to commit them no more. Without a good intention there is no true contrition; without contrition no good confession of sin; and without sincere confession no salvation.

17. When thou hast asked of God contrition, and hast done thy best to obtain it, be not disquieted if thou feel it not within thyself. Generally, it is not a sensible feeling, that is, it affects not the senses. Is thy will opposed to sin? wouldst thou be glad and happy never to have committed it, because thou knowest it offends God? if so, maintain thyself in peace, for thou hast contrition. The regret one feels, says a pious author, at not hating sin as much as one ought to hate it, proceeds from hatred of sin; even as the desire to love God proceeds from our love to God.

V. SELF-ACCUSATION.

18. Accuse thyself each time as carefully as though thou wert to die immediately after. Look upon thy confession as a fruit which God requires from His guilty creature, and regard thyself as a criminal, who,

with a cord round his neck, goes to cast himself at the feet of JESUS CHRIST, in order to confess to Him his miseries, and implore His forgiveness.

19. Place thyself in the presence of JESUS CHRIST Himself. All prayer is an act of faith, and must be looked at with the eye of faith.

20. It frequently costs great pain to reveal certain sins. How many souls who are now in torments in hell, would have been on high in Heaven, if they had really forsaken all those sins wherewith their conscience upbraided them. A moment of salutary shame, a moment of confusion, and they would have obtained eternal glory and happiness; they had not the courage, and they are lost for ever.

21. Knowest thou an important truth? Listen, and profit by it. GOD's justice requires that we should confess our sins in this world or in the next. Therefore, if thou confess thy faults in this world, GOD will accept with kindness and mercy the full acknowledgment which thou makest to Him; He will absolve thee, and will lay them no more to thy charge in the next world. If, on the contrary, thou refuse to confess them here, or confess them not fully, GOD, in the great day of judgment, will bring thee to a public and general account, in the presence of the whole universe. What will be then thy shame and thy confusion! It depends on thee alone, to avoid it by a good and sincere confession.

22. When thou confessest thy sins to GOD, imagine thyself to be on Calvary, at the feet of JESUS CHRIST crucified, Whose precious Blood streams from every wound, to wash thee from thy sins. Open thy heart,

and by degrees, as thy sins shall be cast off from it in the confession thou art making, so thou wilt receive that precious Blood. In this thought remain on thy knees in great reverence, with thy hands joined and thine eyes humbly bent to the earth, like a criminal who is ashamed of his guilt. Listen with great attention to the words of JESUS, speaking to thy soul.

MEDITATION XX.

PILATE SENDS JESUS TO HEROD.

FIRST SUBJECT.

PILATE had no difficulty in his conviction of the innocence of JESUS, and he hastened to announce to the Jews that he found no cause of condemnation in the Man Whom they had brought before him. The chief priests, who had expected a different result of their clamour, were disconcerted for a moment; but soon fearing that the governor would set at liberty one Whose death they were determined upon, they went into paroxysms of fury, and violently renewed their lying accusations against JESUS. However, the Divine SAVIOUR, like a lamb dumb before his shearers, opened not His mouth even to defend Himself. He met the calumny of His accusers with majestic silence. Then Pilate said to Him: "Answerest Thou nothing? Hearrest Thou not how many things they witness against Thee? But JESUS answered him never a word, insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly."

1. Our Divine Master herein gives us by His example many important lessons. He teaches us that it is an act of prudence to be silent when those with whom we deal would not listen to our reasons, when they dispute with warmth, when our self-defence or our explanations are useless. He teaches us, that a Christian who guards his tongue guards his soul, that it is difficult to speak much without committing many faults, and that the best way to repel our enemies is to close our lips. Lastly, He teaches us that silence often edifies as much as speech, that modesty is silent preaching, and that we never speak so well as when we have learnt how to be silent.

2. Be careful to put in practice these holy lessons every time the opportunity offers, and it certainly will offer itself frequently. Thou art often blamed, reprehended, accused, criticised, laughed at, taunted, contradicted. Remember, then, the silence of JESUS: and if thou art not compelled to speak, imitate Him, for this is the opportunity. The more frequent the opportunity, the more shouldst thou strive to profit by it. How much merit mayst thou acquire by this simple practice! how much grace mayst thou obtain! at what degree of perfection arrive! And if thou neglect it, what daily losses wilt thou not sustain! What sins wilt thou not commit! And besides, what more easy? If thou canst not act like our LORD, speak like Him, suffer like Him, at least thou canst be silent like Him. Now, if thou imitate not our Divine Master in a thing which is so easy, in what wouldst thou imitate Him? In nothing? But then, how presumest thou to number thyself with His dis-

ciples? and what right hast thou to hope for a share in His rewards? Resolve from to-day, then, to be silent like Him in the midst of calumnies and wrongs, and to maintain a humble silence, unless it be necessary for thee to speak.

3. Observe that JESUS willed in this circumstance to be forsaken by all, and that He not only Himself maintained silence, but would not that any one should speak in His favour or defend His cause. It was that He placed His confidence entirely in God, to thy confusion, who at the least calamity despairest of God's providence; and instead of giving thyself up unreservedly to His dealings, which, though past finding out, are ever merciful, seekest only to lean on man, and confidest only in his protection. Be wise henceforth, and purpose to thyself ever to recur to God in all thy needs and all thy troubles, well assured that He will protect and defend thee; and if sometimes He permit thee to suffer, although innocent, to sustain unjust losses, or to be wrongfully injured in reputation, know that He permits it in order to reward thy faith and patience in Heaven. Abide, then, calm and tranquil, and never forget that it is a great happiness to endure an affront, a calumny, a sensible wrong, or loss of property, without complaining, murmuring, or defending oneself, leaving all with confidence in God's hands.

Colloquy.—O Sovereign Protector of the miserable, I give myself up to Thine infinite goodness and boundless mercy! I put all my confidence in Thee, because Thou art supremely powerful; I hope in Thee, because Thou art infinitely good; I look to Thee for

help in my need, and for defence in my tribulation, because Thou art my FATHER, and I am Thy child, though most unworthy of such a title. When I shall be in trouble, I purpose to betake myself to Thee, and to ask for relief at the hands of Thy compassion. Thou mayest act towards me according to the views of Thine infinite wisdom ! If Thou wilt that I be in affliction, I am sure Thou permittest it only for the greater good of my soul : Thy desire being that I should exercise myself in patience, and merit thus a higher reward in Heaven. May Thy blessed will be done in all things ! All I ask Thee, O my GOD, is, that in sending me tribulations, Thou wilt send me likewise strength to bear them for the love of Thee, and patience, which nothing may make me lose. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Notwithstanding all the accusations of the JEWS, Pilate did not feel disposed to condemn JESUS ; but still he dared not yet declare Him legally absolved. The enemies of the SAVIOUR seeing that he feared to displease them, and feeling all the advantage which his weakness gave them, sought to profit by it. They therefore insisted, saying, “ He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee, unto this place.”

1. If Pilate, who well knew the innocence of JESUS, had had the courage to act according to the dictates of his conscience, and to set Him free, the JEWS would have recognised that in their governor they had a master, and they would have ended, whether they would or no, by submitting to his decision. Un-

happily Pilate showed himself weak, and his guilty weakness threw him into perplexities out of which he saw no outlet, and which caused his ruin. This is what will happen to thee most assuredly, if, when thou facest a duty which thou canst not fulfil, without risking the contempt or hatred of the wicked, thou hast not courage resolutely to take the line of fulfilling the duty, whatever may happen. There are a thousand circumstances in the Christian life, wherein the alternative is either to offend GOD by sin, or to run the risk of displeasing the world. What must thou do in these cases ? Oh, hesitate not ! Please GOD before every thing ; obey His requirements, and be convinced that those whom thou displeasest will have no power to hurt thee, unless the LORD, for wise reasons should permit it. Let GOD and thy conscience ever be obeyed before all else.

2. Is it thus thou hast always acted ? Hast thou never hesitated between the fulfilment of thy duties and the fear of drawing some evil upon thyself ? Hast thou never given up GOD for some small interest or mean human respect ? Make haste to repair the past by a sincere conviction : there is yet time. Apply thyself now to please the LORD in all things. Be faithful to fulfil for love of Him thy Christian obligations, and prefer to suffer any thing rather than commit one mortal sin. Despise the world, its opinions, its persecutions, its sarcasms ; all its ill-natured words, all its enmity will pass away, but GOD's judgment will not pass away. What can the world do against thee if thou art the true servant of JESUS CHRIST ? Take courage, faithful soul : it is a glorious thing for

thee to be the object of the contempt of the world. If thou belongedst to the world, the world would love thee and honour thee; but because thou belongest to God, it hates thee and bears thee ill-will. Shouldst thou be grieved thereat? Shouldst thou renounce thy Divine Master? No, certainly. Persevere to the end in the love of JESUS, and thy reward shall be great in Heaven.

Colloquy.—O blessed JESUS, my glory and my beloved, wherefore was I once unhappy enough to trample under foot Thy holy commandments through human respect, through fear of displeasing the world! Wherefore did I so grievously offend Thee, that I might not draw forth the contempt of the wicked! Oh, I repent of so weak and cowardly a conduct, and humbly ask Thy forgiveness! To-day, O my God, I give myself to Thee without reservation; and I will, by Thy divine grace, belong to Thee for ever. Whatever sacrifice it may require that I may ever remain faithful to Thee, I am ready to fulfil it. Provided Thou love me, and I love Thee, persecutions, sarcasms, and the contempt of the world, are nothing to me. To fulfil Thy holy will in all things, to fulfil it every day to my last breath, to fulfil it whatever it may cost me here, is my most ardent desire. Accept it, O blessed JESUS, and give me strength to put it into execution! I look to Thy mercy for this grace! I ask it of Thee with confidence! Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Pilate, hearing that JESUS was accused of having stirred up Galilee, asked whether He were a Galilean;

and upon being told that He was, he hastened to send Him to Herod, king of that province, who was just then at Jerusalem, probably for the feast of the Passover. Two different motives induced Pilate to send the SAVIOUR to Herod: in the first place, he wished to rid himself of this judgment, which was very troublesome to him; and, in the second, he was glad to become reconciled to Herod, with whom he had had some quarrels.

1. Observe how blind and unjust was Pilate's conduct. He would have been very glad to have avoided the being compelled to condemn JESUS against his conscience; but not daring to declare Him absolved, for fear of offending the Jews, he sent Him to Herod, thereby exposing Him to the risks of a new examination, and perhaps of condemnation to death; for he might have presumed that the murderer of John the Baptist would be likely to become also the murderer of JESUS, and that he who had sacrificed a prophet to the resentment of a woman, was only too capable of sacrificing another to the hatred of the chief men of his nation. But he cared not for all these things; he sought only to extricate himself from a thorny embarrassment. Poor blinded man! he saw not that by this cowardly conduct he was rendering himself an accomplice of all the evil that might ensue.

2. Oh, how many Christians are there who act like Pilate! Because they have not themselves done the evil thing, they think themselves exempt from blame and sin. It is true they have not committed the fault, but they have thrown others into the necessity of committing it, or else they have not prevented it

when they might ; are they the less guilty therefore ? Recollect thyself, and see whether thou have not likewise to reproach thyself with similar conduct ?

3. Think of the shame which our Divine SAVIOUR must have felt in being dragged like a criminal before the Judgment-seat of Herod ; and when loaded with chains, He had to cross for the fourth time the streets of Jerusalem, amid the hootings and insults of the populace. Behold to what degradations He was subjected : they struck Him, pushed Him violently, threw mud upon Him ; some called Him a false prophet, others a vile impostor, and all, in a word, outraged Him as they pleased. Knowest thou who it was whom they were treating thus ignominiously ? it was thy GOD the Sovereign LORD of heaven and earth ; Him before whom the angels prostrate themselves to adore. And it was for thee, poor and insignificant creature, that He was thus humbled, buffeted, and dragged along. Oh, how GOD loves thee ! How guilty art thou, if thou returnest Him not love for His love ! Love Him, therefore, with thy deepest love ; and to prove it to Him, offend Him no more ; serve Him with fresh ardour, and seek to-day for an opportunity of doing something to please Him ; for instance, by fulfilling more carefully and attentively those duties of thy state in life which are hardest to thee, or in overcoming resolutely the repugnance thou feelest towards such and such practices of the Christian life.

Colloquy.—Sovereign LORD of the universe, O JESUS, Thou Who art full of glory, greatness and splendour, Thou Whom millions of angels serve and adore in

Heaven, why wast Thou thus ill-treated, offended, and dishonoured by Thy creatures ? How, O LORD, Thou art the King of kings, and yet I behold Thee for me bound, for me dragged through the mire of the streets, for me outraged and struck, who am but a miserable earthworm ! O gracious JESUS, I love and marvel at that incomprehensible love of Thine which led Thee to accept so many affronts and torments for love of me, and in atonement for my sins. I hate the vile sins which were the cause of Thy torments : I repent of them with my whole soul, and I sincerely resolve never to commit them more. I will prove to Thee my gratitude and love, by applying myself to fulfil all my duties and to keep Thy holy law in all things. Help me with Thy grace, and increase each day in me the fire of Thy love. Amen.

Resolutions.

ON LOVE OF SILENCE.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. It is not easy to explain in few words the multitude of evils which proceed from the tongue. It is a sentence pronounced by the HOLY SPIRIT that much speaking is never exempt from sin. The habit of speaking much is a source of vice, a sign of ignorance and folly. In vain does he who cannot bridle his tongue labour to acquire the gift of prayer, peace of heart and union with GOD: he will never succeed.

2. There is never much wisdom were there are many words. The wise man speaks little, because he

fears to speak ill. The fool, on the contrary, speaks much, and almost always without reflection or reason, and at random. Accustom thyself, then, for the future to speak measured words, and only when it may be useful to do so. The most difficult of all sciences is to know how to speak; thou wilt learn it only in learning to be silent.

3. Strive to keep silence as far as possible. Speak oftener to GOD than to men. If thou succeed in mastering thy tongue, thou wilt equally succeed in mastering thy passions.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. Who can describe all the advantages of silence? It produces a disposition to mental prayer, recollection, and union with our LORD. It sanctifies the calumnies, persecutions, griefs, and afflictions which we endure. If thou suffer all these evils without complaining, thou makest a ready offering to GOD of thy body, thy soul, thy reputation, thy riches, and all thy possessions. It is a precious offering, and will render thee acceptable to the LORD!

2. By silence in the midst of the tribulations of life, thou imitatest thy Divine SAVIOUR, Who, as thou knowest, opened not His mouth, at the time of His Passion, to defend Himself or complain. What happiness for thee to resemble JESUS! what a privilege to walk in His steps.

3. Moreover, silence sheds in the soul of him who maintains it constantly a calm and perfect tranquillity; and whatever happens, he is not troubled. Indeed, silence is so good a thing, that it is sufficient that a

man maintain it with discretion to be regarded as wise and prudent.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. I repeat to thee, then, speak little, and leave not thy silence except for something better. Thou wilt often reproach thyself for having spoken; seldom, if ever, wilt thou repent of having been silent. Oh, it is so difficult to speak, and not to say more than we ought, that it is infinitely better, in most circumstances, to keep our lips closed and be silent.

2. Christian soul, if thou wilt advance in perfection and in the love of God, I cannot say to thee too often, speak little, speak low, speak without excitement, speak but when necessary, speak not ever uncharitably, speak meekly, speak with simplicity, speak truthfully, speak without affectation, without precipitation, without vanity, speak when thou oughtest to speak, and keep silence when thou shouldst keep it.

3. O my God, vouchsafe to bridle my tongue, that it may never utter a word which might offend Thee, wound my neighbour, and give me cause for self-reproach.

MEDITATION XXI.

JESUS IN THE PRESENCE OF HEROD.

FIRST SUBJECT.

THE renown of JESUS CHRIST had reached the court of Herod. That prince had often heard of the miracles which the SAVIOUR performed everywhere and of His

wonderful teaching in the towns and small boroughs of Galilee. Therefore in seeing Him brought before him, he was overjoyed, because he had long desired to know Him, and he also hoped that He would perform some miracle in his presence.

1. Herod desired to see JESUS CHRIST, but not from any feeling of devotion, nor from any desire to profit by His lessons and instructions ; it was solely for the gratification of seeing an extraordinary man, and to satisfy his curiosity. Now in a thousand instances thou hast acted thus. How often hast thou attended the religious assemblies of God's children, how often hast thou shown a lively eagerness for the public services of devotion, for retreats, preachings ; and that not to please the LORD, to fulfil thy Christian duties, or to strive to become better, but from vanity, from a wish to show thyself, from a desire to hear the news of the day, to make time pass, to satisfy an idle curiosity, to hear a new eloquent preacher, or from some other equally paltry human motive. Listen to the voice of thy conscience on this point, and no doubt it will justly accuse thee. And is it surprising if thou hast never gathered any fruit from all these exercises, and if thou art still as imperfect as formerly, and perhaps even less advanced in true devotion than thou wast some years ago ? Mourn over thy misery, and that after having had so many opportunities of advancing in perfection, and of labouring for thy salvation, thou hast profited in nothing, or at least hast derived no benefit to thy soul. Pray to the LORD to afford thee other opportunities, and likewise to grant thee grace to make a good and salutary use of them.

2. The desire Herod felt to see JESUS was a barren desire ; for had he wished sincerely to see Him, to know Him, and even to converse with Him, no one could have prevented him from summoning Him sooner. It was in Galilee, in his own states, that JESUS preached and performed the marvellous deeds of which he heard daily reports ; every one knew where He dwelt, since people flocked to Him from all parts. And did Herod take a single step to see Him ? Oh, how many Christians resemble him in this point ! how many like him conceive a desire to see and know JESUS, form a thousand projects of conversion and penitence, and stop there. Art thou not of this number ? Resolve, then, at length firmly to serve GOD with faithfulness and fervour ; neglect no longer the graces which Heaven sends thee to-day, because it may be that to-morrow they will not be vouchsafed to thee. Remember that there are in hell a great number of reprobates, who had wished to do right, but had never had the courage to put it in practice ; they had often conceived an intention of being converted, but never fulfilled it, and they have been damned. Learn from their sorrow to be wiser than they, and set thy conscience in order as speedily as thou canst.

Colloquy.—I acknowledge and confess it, O my GOD ! Thou hast granted me a thousand opportunities of doing good, and of working out my salvation ; but alas ! I have never profited by them. Either I have neglected them, or I have used them only with coldness or from habit ; I purpose to lose them thus no more. Give me Thy Spirit, O JESUS ! that He may teach me to avail myself of all the means of sal-

vation which Thou dost lavish on me. At the day of judgment Thou wilt set before me the numberless means which Thou hast afforded me to help me to grow in virtue, and Thou wilt cover me with confusion at the thought of my bad use of them ; vouchsafe me grace to be penitent, and thus to avoid Thy terrible condemnation. Grant that, being perfectly faithful to all the opportunities Thou givest me of serving Thee aright in this life, I may be rewarded by serving and loving Thee eternally in heaven. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Herod put a multitude of questions to JESUS. He interrogated Him upon subjects of mere curiosity. He inquired of Him about His person, His doctrine, and His miracles, hoping, no doubt, that the SAVIOUR would strive to show what He was by working some miracle before him. But JESUS not only worked no miracle, but moreover answered him nothing, and maintained an absolute silence throughout his multiplied questions.

1. Consider all that this silence affords of instruction to thyself. JESUS willed to be silent, because Herod was a proud man, and that GOD is pleased only to converse with simple, meek, and humble souls. It is not to those who approach Him in mental prayer through a spirit of curiosity that He communicates His graces, but only to those souls which are upright, full of good-will, and detached from self, that He speaks, and puts within them His most secret inspirations.

2. JESUS willed to be silent, because Herod, as we

have before said, never having given himself the least trouble to go and hear Him when he might easily have done so, it was most just that now the SAVIOUR should refuse to let him hear His voice. This happens every day to those who despise the graces and inspirations of GOD. Often does the LORD speak inwardly in a soul, and invite her to return to Him : the soul listens not to Him ; she refuses for many years to hear that voice calling her ; but a day comes when JESUS ceases to speak, and no longer sends inspirations. Then the soul, terrified, cries to Heaven, moans, asks with tears that it may be given to her again to hear that inward voice which spoke to her of grace and mercy ; but the LORD continues silent ; and nothing is more terrible than the silence of GOD ! Oh, pray much, that thou mayst never know it by sad experience.

3. Our Divine Master willed, likewise, to be silent before Herod, because he was unchaste and an adulterer, and that GOD will have no relations with souls which are soiled with the sin of impurity. Oh,— GOD forbid!—art thou thyself tainted with this hideous evil? and if so, dost thou all thou canst to tear it from thy heart? What sacrifice imposest thou on thyself to destroy it? Oh, know well that never wilt thou receive the favours of the LORD, so long as that monster shall possess thee; never wilt thou comprehend, never shalt thou taste of spiritual things. What connection can there be between JESUS and one who is impure? With a heart full of uncleanness like thine, darest thou think thyself worthy of that intimate communion which the GOD of all

holiness vouchsafes alone to chaste souls ? Darest thou pretend to close converse with Him whom thou outragest daily by so many sins ? Darest thou hope for the select graces which He grants only to His friends ? Poor unhappy one ! if thou wilt that God should speak to thee ; if thou wilt that He should reply to thy supplications, begin by detesting those iniquities which He hates. Purify thy heart, by contrition, by confession, by tears of penitence, from all the corruption which defiles it, and return freely to the LORD, and He will return to thee.

4. Lastly, JESUS was silent, because Herod, in questioning Him, sought not to instruct himself and become better, but only to amuse himself and be gratified. A great lesson this, which should teach thee not to enter upon prayer or meditation with the expectation of experiencing spiritual sweetneses and consolations, but solely to please God more, to know thy duties better, and to obtain the grace necessary to fulfil them. If the LORD, in His goodness, send thee consolations, thank Him humbly for a favour of which thou art unworthy ! if, on the contrary, it be His will to leave thee in dryness, submit to His will, who treats thee according to thy deserts. A sinner like thee should not seek in prayer for feelings of deep spirituality, or extraordinary light ; he should but place himself in profound humility in the presence of God, and beseech Him to grant forgiveness. The more humble thou art in prayer, the nearer will God be to thee, the more graciously He will speak to thy heart, to instruct thee, enlighten thee, and sanctify thee.

Colloquy.—O GOD, Who graciously sufferest me to speak to Thee in prayer, although I am but dust and sin, have pity on my need. Grant me a pure heart, that I may less unworthily come into Thy presence. My miseries are extreme, and I have deep need of being succoured by Thee : but, alas ! I fear that my sins set an obstacle to the effects of Thy goodness towards me. Create in me, therefore, a clean heart ; wash me from every stain, and grant me bitter repentance, whereby I may obtain the forgiveness of my past iniquities. The love wherewith Thou abasest Thyself to me, O GOD, Who art very greatness, the tender invitations Thou givest me to come to Thee, the loving-kindness wherewith Thou listenest to me, all constrain me to draw near to Thee, to invoke Thee, and petition Thee for the gifts I need. Reject me not, O my GOD ! and though my sins render me fit only to be driven away from Thee, yet deign to listen to my prayer, and answer it. Enable me to pray often, and ever with pure intention, without curiosity, without self-seeking, solely to do Thy will, to be more united to Thee, who art the well-spring of all holiness, and to learn from day to day to become more faithful to Thy law, and more pleasing in Thine eyes. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Herod, indignant at a silence which seemed to signify that JESUS respected not greatly either his person or his questions, treated Him with contempt and mockery, as did likewise his whole court. Regarding Him as a maniac or an idiot, he treated Him as such, and sent Him back to Pilate, having first arrayed Him

in a white robe, which was the garment wherewith maniacs were clothed.

1. Behold, then, our GOD, HIM, WHO fills the universe with the splendour of that great wisdom of which HE is the source, treated as one who was mad ; yea, treated as one who was senseless ! At the court of Herod, in the midst of the streets and public places of Jerusalem, they loaded HIM with hootings, railleries, infuriated outrages. No one came to HIS help ; no one took compassion on HIS humiliation ; no one spoke a word in HIS defence. And yet that Man, now the object of every one's contempt, a little while ago filled Judea with admiration for HIS life, HIS doctrine, and HIS miracles. Where then were the sick, the paralytic, the blind, the deaf, the lame, whom HE had healed ? where were the thousands of men whom HE had fed miraculously in the desert ? where were the dead whom HE raised ? Not one appeared. It would seem they were ashamed to own acquaintance with that Man, or to have received any benefit from HIM. HE was alone, HE had not a friend to stand by HIM, HE was forsaken by all. What humiliation ! and yet JESUS submitted to it without uttering a single complaint.

2. Art thou worthy, after such an example, to bear the name of Christian, a name which signifies an imitator of JESUS CHRIST ? thou who on all occasions seekest to appear wise, learned, clever ; who desirest nothing so much as praise, renown, honour, and pomp ; who imaginest that every sort of consideration is thy due ; who walkest with thy head high, with an air of pride, as if thou wert the greatest person in the world ?

Art thou really a Christian, thou who hast not courage to make the least sacrifice for thy GOD, who dreadest the least inconvenience, who canst not bear the least humiliation? Art thou a Christian, who art so careful in adorning thy body, which, after all, is but a heap of corruption, who coverest it with costly attire, and with numerous vanities full of ruinous luxury? Oh, receive to-day from thy Divine Master a lesson calculated to make thee blush. See how He suffered Himself to be clothed with a robe of scorn, shapeless, tattered, all covered with spittle and with mud: and remembering that He endured all this for love of thee, learn to forsake for love of Him all which savours of luxury and vanity in thy attire; learn to clothe thyself with simplicity, according to thy station, and recollect that the brightest ornament of a disciple of JESUS CHRIST is modesty, accompanied by the practice of Christian virtues.

Colloquy.—I see, O my JESUS, Thou didst will to receive outrages and contempt from all classes of people, and in every place. Thou didst embrace them, without fretfulness, without complaint, but with loving patience. Thou didst will that the world should treat Thee as a madman, to teach me to be indifferent to the world, its opinions, and its mockeries. Cause me to profit by Thy holy lessons, by despising the honours of this world, by offering to Thee, with patience and in the silence of humility, the sarcasms and wrongs of which I may be the object. I am a Christian, and as such I have been made Thy disciple; Thou givest me continual lessons of patience, meekness, and humility. I will, therefore, henceforth imitate Thee, walk in Thy

steps, and make every effort to become like Thee. By the merits of Thy meekness and humility, grant me, O JESUS, all the graces I need to fulfil my resolutions. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF THE ABUSE OF GOD'S GRACE.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. Misuse not the grace of God, because it is absolutely necessary to thee, and without it thou wilt never be able to work out thy salvation. If thou art unhappy enough to neglect it, thou breakest the key which alone can open to thee the gates of heaven, and thou destroyest a treasure without which it will be impossible to purchase the crown of eternal glory.

2. What is more precious than grace ? It is the price of the labours, sufferings, and death of JESUS CHRIST. The least degree of grace is of more value than all the possessions and all the pleasures of the world. Put all these together on one side of the scale, and grace on the other, it will considerably overbalance them. And yet dost thou not often despise this precious treasure, preferring to it, without remorse, some shameful enjoyment, some worthless interest, and lose it with less regret than a piece of money ? But thou forgettest that in thus misusing the grace of God, thou tramplest under foot the Blood of JESUS CHRIST ! Thou makest the fruit of His death to be not only useless, but fatal to thyself ; and from being the efficacious instrument of thy salvation, to become the chief cause of thy condemnation.

3. Oh, if GOD were to grant now to the devils and to the reprobate one only of these graces so abundantly bestowed upon thee, and which thou neglectest so lightly, how would they not avail themselves thereof, with what faithfulness would they not obey its inspirations! They will one day be thine accusers before the Sovereign Judge, and cry out for vengeance against thee, if thou continue to misuse a blessing, whereof they now know the whole value, but which, alas, will never more be granted to them!

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. The deprivation of grace is the most just penalty of the disregard we have shown to it. Grace is a visit from the LORD, wherewith He deigns to honour thee; if thou close against Him the door of thy heart, and will not receive Him, He withdraws. Grace is a gift which GOD offers thee with gratuitous liberality, a gift containing every treasure; if thou refusest the gift, He ceases to offer it to thee. Grace is light; the sun shines upon thee to enlighten thee; if thou closest the shutters, thou remainest in darkness. And I ask thee whether, after such conduct on thy part, it is not most just that thou remain poor, destitute of every spiritual blessing, and deprived of heavenly light?

2. The deprivation of grace is the most terrible punishment with which GOD visits the contempt we show to it. GOD often chastises us as a Father in mercy and for our good; He loves us while chastening us; He sometimes punishes us as a Judge; He wills that His justice be satisfied; He will have the crime expiated; but He wills not the destruction of the cri-

minal ; He hates the sin, but not the sinner. But He likewise punishes as an enemy ; He takes revenge on the guilt, and condemns the guilty one ; it is thus He punishes the lost in hell, and thus He punishes us when He takes away grace from us ; He then visits us as an enemy. Other evils may be great blessings to us ; but that is an evil which only ends in our ruin and damnation. Beseech the L ORD to withhold so fatal a punishment from thee, and fear to draw it on thyself by misusing His grace.

3. Deprivation of grace is God's most usual way of punishing the disregard or misuse of it. He withdraws from sinners light, inspirations, and the good impulses to which they have been rebels, and strikes them with a fatal blindness. Oh, how commonly is this punishment sent even to Christians ! perceivest thou not that it is beginning to be likewise thine ? is not thy heart becoming insensible to things of faith ? Hearrest thou still as often as formerly the interior voice of God speaking to thy soul ? Forgettest thou not easily the great subject of thy sanctification and salvation ? Oh, think of it in earnest, and delay not until by thy continual unfaithfulness the grace of the L ORD be entirely withdrawn from thee, and perhaps without return.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. Ask often of God His holy grace. Thou wilt obtain it only by fervently asking it ; but remember, that it will only be by faithfulness to the grace He sends thee, that thou wilt be in a state to receive still greater and more precious grace. A continual re-

sponding to grace is the sure means of never being deprived of it.

2. Every time thou feelest grace constraining thee, resist it not, lest it withdraw from thee to punish thy resistance.

3. Beseech the LORD to punish thee in any way rather than by the deprivation of His grace, and say to Him often with the Psalmist: "O my GOD, cast me not away from Thy presence, and take not Thy HOLY SPIRIT from me!"

MEDITATION XXII.

JESUS IS SENT BACK TO PILATE AND COMPARED WITH BARABBAS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

HEROD having sent back our Divine Redeemer to Pilate, this one found himself again thrown into the embarrassment out of which he had imagined his cleverness had extricated him. Convinced as he was of the innocence of JESUS, he could not resolve to condemn Him; on the other side he feared to contradict powerful and numerous accusers. In his anxiety he sought again to tranquillise the enemies of the LORD, and turning towards the chief priests, he said: "Ye have brought this Man unto me as one that perverteth the people; and behold, I having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching these things whereof ye accuse Him. No, nor yet Herod; for I sent you to him; and lo, nothing

worthy of death is found in Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him."

1. What a sequel, O GOD, to such a declaration! Pilate acknowledged JESUS to be innocent ; he brought in the judgment of Herod to confirm his own ; he was convinced that no motive but the malice of the Jews had occasioned His being delivered into his hands, and the determination he came to, after all, was to chastise JESUS before releasing Him! Wherefore so monstrous an iniquity? It was that he hoped by means of a mere chastisement to save JESUS from a heavier condemnation ; and he flattered himself that this deference to the wishes of the SAVIOUR's enemies, would appease their wrath against Him. But alas ! this admixture of justice and injustice succeeded not ; the enemies of JESUS were not appeased ; on the contrary, on seeing the weakness of the judge, they the more felt their own power, became more determined, and saw they could gain all they wished. Is not this what always happens to those who seek to combine God and the world, their conscience and their passions, their duty and their interest? Such things can never blend ! one must be wholly God's or wholly the world's. When we hesitate about our duty, we are then on the brink of opposing ourselves to it : he who is shaken by temptation, and wishes to come to terms with it, is very near his fall. We repeat what we have said above, had Pilate armed himself with strength of purpose, and begun by pronouncing a just decision : had he given a verdict as he ought, to the effect that JESUS CHRIST was innocent, and His enemies were calumniators,—he had triumphed over that vile temp-

tation of self-interest, which at last triumphed over him. But the first weakness insensibly beguiled him into other still greater weaknesses ; and from one step to another it led him in a few hours to the summit of crime. Learn from hence never to hesitate, when it is in question to reject a temptation of whatever nature. Repulse it vigorously at its first assault, and know that thy least concession to it will be sufficient to ruin thee.

2. One of the most precious graces which GOD can bestow upon sinners, is to preserve in their soul a certain inward light, and to make the voice of remorse heard in their conscience, to terrify them and inspire them with horror for the sins they commit. But if, unhappily, they stifle this voice of conscience, if they abuse so great a blessing, GOD, by a terrible judgment, withdraws His grace, and they give themselves up to evil without remorse, and with deplorable blindness. Precisely this befel Pilate. The unhappy governor knew the innocence of JESUS CHRIST, and proclaimed it several times to the people ; so much so, that he would not at first consent to condemn Him, notwithstanding the entreaties of the Jews ; soon neglecting the inward warnings of his conscience, he blinded himself, became hardened, and ended by giving up the Innocent One to the fury of His enemies.

3. How often has not the LORD sought to hold thee back when thou wast on the brink of the gulf, by sending thee inward terrors, trouble of conscience, and remorse ! How often has He not alarmed thee with the thought of His justice, and of the punish-

ment He draws out of sin! But thou hast cared little for these inward warnings of thy GOD; thou hast not the less followed thy own caprices; thou hast given thyself up to the will of thy passions, and hast omitted nothing to stifle within thee the salutary voice of grace which called thee back into the path of virtue. Is it not thus thou dost act? Oh, tremble, for a day will come when the remorse thou hast so often despised will be thy torment. Oh, how will this worm of conscience gnaw thee internally at the hour of death! how cruelly will it agonise thee at that terrible moment, and throughout eternity. If thou wilt have that sorrow averted, crush it from this day, not by blinding thyself, but by weeping for thy sins, by detesting all the wanderings of thy past life, by humbly asking of GOD forgiveness for all thine iniquities, and by sincere penitence. Thank the LORD for all the inspirations and inward warnings which He has given thee heretofore, and beseech Him to continue them to thee to the end of thy life, in order that all thy actions being enlightened by the supernatural light of His grace, thou mayest walk no more in darkness, and be no longer unhappy enough to offend Him.

Colloquy.—HOLY SPIRIT, true light of our hearts, I confess that I have merited as the punishment of my sins, my soul should be filled with darkness, and given up to blindness; but I beseech Thee not to inflict this fatal punishment upon me. Rather have pity on me, and shed into my poor soul a powerful degree of grace to discover to me the grievousness of my sins, the greatness of Thy perfections, and the terribleness

of Thy punishments. I thank Thee for all the inward light Thou hast given me hitherto; I thank Thee equally for the remorse Thou hast sent me, to help me to come out of sin, and the continual encouragement whereby Thou hast sought to win me to what is good. I beseech Thee to increase this light, to redouble my remorse, if I have the unhappiness to offend Thee, and to draw me to good by Thy most mighty inspirations, that I may learn to love Thee more and more, till I may arrive at Thy Feet in Heaven, to receive the crown Thou hast promised to the faithfulness of my efforts. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Pilate seeing that the means he had adopted to save JESUS satisfied not His enemies, and that their thirst for His Blood was only the more insatiable, conceived another expedient; this was to address himself to the people, and demand of them what he could not obtain from the rulers. It was customary upon the occasion of the solemnity of the Passover, for the governor to set at liberty some one prisoner, whom the people chose. Pilate thought this a favourable circumstance for obtaining from the Jews the liberty of JESUS. There was then in the prison a notorious malefactor named Barabbas, who had been placed there on account of a murder which he had committed in an insurrection. The governor had no doubt that in proposing a choice between JESUS, Who was pursued by the hatred of the chief men of the nation, and Barabbas, who was the object of universal execration, the people would prefer Him to Barabbas.

1. Who can describe the shame which our Divine Master felt in seeing Himself thus compared to such a man as Barabbas ? And yet He deigned to suffer this comparison ! His lips uttered not a single word of complaint or indignation ! Oh, how does this condemn thy pride and vanity, who being no more than a little dust, canst not suffer without irritation to be disputed with by an inferior about the least thing ! Thou who art so foolishly presumptuous as to exalt thyself incessantly above all others : thou who strivest to pass for righteous, whereas thou art only a sinner ! thou who desirest always to be in the first place, and who labourest incessantly to put others behind thee, without regard either to charity or courtesy ! is this Christian humility ? is this to tread in the steps of the Divine Master ? Wilt thou never learn that the true glory of a disciple of JESUS is to choose even the lowest place, and that the more humble thou art on earth, the greater thou wilt one day be in Heaven ?

2. Bewail thy want of courage to imitate JESUS ; alas ! thou followest Him so far off that thou hast almost lost sight of Him already ; He is humble, and thou art full of pride ; He is meek and gentle, and thou art harsh, imperious, easily irritated by the least thing ; He was resigned to all, and thou canst not put up with any thing, either from GOD or man. Oh, what a difference between thee and the LORD JESUS ; be confounded, and beseech the LORD to grant thee grace to resemble Him more nearly !

Colloquy.—JESUS, SON of GOD, who can compare himself to Thee ? Thou art infinitely greater than all creatures, and yet for love of us Thou didst consent

to be humbled, even to a parallel with a malefactor. Oh, how well Thou knowest how to confound my pride, my vain-glory and vanity ! Destroy, O God, I beseech Thee, the evil root of pride which spreads through every part of my soul ; tear it up, and give me grace to love humiliation and self-abasement : Help me to become the perfect imitator of Thy humility ! draw me to Thyself by the sweetness of Thy love, that I may follow Thee step by step, and put in practice all the examples of virtue which Thou hast given me. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

The Jewish people, urged on by the intrigues, exhortations, and calumnies of the scribes and Pharisees, cried out with one voice to Pilate, “ Not this Man, but Barabbas ! ”

1. Be amazed at the stupid blindness of that guilty nation, which was determined upon the death of the innocent JESUS, and which required the release of a villain and cowardly assassin ; but likewise remember to thy shame, that thou hast often acted in a similar manner. How often, in fact, hast thou put thy Redeemer on a parallel with a malefactor ! how often placed Him in the rank of a vile person ! This thou hast done every time thou hast obeyed the instigations of thy infernal enemy, in preference to the inspirations of God. This thou hast done when choosing between the alternative of serving God on the one hand, or the creature on the other ; thou hast given the preference to sin, to the great injury of thy soul, though thou knewest very clearly that thou

oughtest to prefer GOD. Oh, what an offence hast thou committed against JESUS CHRIST, when, being under the necessity of choosing between His love and a momentary pleasure or a base interest, thou hast contemptuously rejected His love, to run after that pleasure or interest!

2. Poor unhappy sinner! examine thy whole life; try and find out which prevails with thee, the flesh or the spirit, temporal or eternal interest, earthly or heavenly things, and thou wilt clearly see which is he whose death thou desirest, JESUS or Barabbas. For know this well, that every time thou committest a mortal sin, thou criest out with the Jews, Crucify, crucify the SON OF GOD! not this Man, but Barabbas. Weep for thy blindness, and make the resolutions which are most needful to thee.

Colloquy.—Well mayest Thou, O my God, reproach my soul with the guilt of its vile unrighteousness towards Thee, in having despised Thee and Thy grace, and set Thee far below the meanest gratifications! I repent of the deep offence I have committed against Thee, and the great wrong of which I have been guilty towards Thee. I have preferred my caprice and self-interest before Thy commandments and good pleasure. Oh, that I had never committed so monstrous an evil! O infinite Wisdom! who beholdest clearly the wickedness of sin, fill my soul with all possible horror thereof, that I may ever detest it, and never more yield to any temptation which would lead me to commit it. Enlighten me with a ray of Thy heavenly light, that I may behold the monster in all its ugliness, and avoid it as I ought. I beseech Thee

to grant me this mercy in the name of the great need I have thereof, and in the name of Thy infinite goodness. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF OUR PREDOMINANT PASSIONS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

1. All the passions of our heart are to be feared, because they may, if we do not repress them, hurt us much and ruin us for eternity. But, undeniably, the most dangerous of all is the one which is called the *predominant passion*. There are few persons who have not some one predominant passion ; the most virtuous are not those who are without it, but those who know best how to struggle against it.

2. Nothing is more difficult than to overcome the predominant passion. Every passion blinds us concerning the sins to which it binds us ; but the predominant passion far more than all. It seduces our reason, and makes us treat the strongest doubtings of conscience as if they were mere scruples. It prevents our seeing the disorders into which it is drawing us, and generally leads us to impenitence. This passion is the regulator of the greater number of our movements, it enters into our every desire and every thought ; strengthened by many repeated acts, it ends with becoming a fixed habit and a necessity. Indeed, do we see many persons get rid of a predominant passion, of an inveterate habit ? It is very rare. Twenty years ago thou wast proud, or given to evil-speaking, or impure, or idle, or ill-tempered ; art thou

not still so now, though after many repen-tances and many resolutions? This predominant passion has perhaps even been growing stronger; if thou beware not, it will adhere to thee throughout life, and will lead thee, thou mayest fear, to hell. Wouldst thou be its shameful slave through thy life, or its unhappy victim throughout eternity? Well, resolve, cost what it may, to sacrifice it from this day forth to God and to thy salvation. Without this thou art lost.

3. If thou fail to conquer thy predominant passion, thou wilt certainly be conquered by it. There can be no truce with that enemy; peace is only to be gained by victory, and thy salvation depends most probably upon this victory. But to lay low so terrible a passion, thou must recognise it, and that is not always easy. These are the signs whereby thou mayest recognise it and distinguish it.

SECOND SUBJECT.

1. The predominant passion is that which is the origin and the most common cause of thy other faults and sins; it is that which most disturbs the peace of thy soul, and most frequently occasions thee remorse.

2. The predominant passion is that which chiefly is the matter of thy confessions, and is most constantly uppermost at that time. It is that which thou hast to struggle most against, and against which the struggle causes thee greatest repugnance. It is that which is of all thy passions the most importunate, intractable, imperious, and deeply rooted, and—shall I say it?—the most dear to thy heart; to touch upon that is to touch upon thy tenderest point.

3. Answer me truly. Among the passions of thy heart, is there one which resembles this? One only of these signs is sufficient to make thee recognise it; but if all these signs are united, thou canst not fail to discover it clearly. Behold the enemy! thou must decidedly carry on a conflict with it. Arm thyself, therefore, against it, and delay not, lest it take a new form, and then it become impossible to vanquish it.

THIRD SUBJECT.

1. To stir thyself up to the conflict, and as a help towards victory, do what I am going to tell thee. Look upon thy predominant passion as the greatest enemy thou hast in this world, and the one to be fought against most strenuously. Yet although thou shalt fight incessantly against it, remember it will never quite die, until it die with thyself, and so thou must ever fear it and keep it in check.

2. Remember, for a certainty, that if ever thou art doomed to hell, thy damnation will be owing to this fatal passion. Make a law to thyself, to be faithfully observed, not to pass a day without some victory over this passion. Inflict some self-chastisement every time thou shalt detect thyself to have failed in doing so. Be very careful to repress its first movements the instant thou become aware of them.

3. From time to time ask GOD's grace to conquer this passion. Practise frequent self-examination, and review the effects which this passion produces. At each confession renew in thy soul the resolution to fight against it without cessation. Finally, pray much to obtain from heaven that strength thou needest; prayer will ever be thy most powerful weapon.

MEDITATION XXIII.

PILATE CONDEMN'S JESUS TO BE SCOURGED.

FIRST SUBJECT.

PILATE, seeing his measures frustrated, and not knowing what further course to take, said to the Jews, “What will ye, then, that I do with JESUS Which is called CHRIST?” They cried out at once, “Let Him be crucified!” “Why, what evil hath He done? I have found no cause of death in Him.” But they cried out the more exceedingly, “Crucify Him! crucify Him!”

1. The dread of offending the Jews, and of exciting a second sedition among them, and of thereby perhaps incurring the displeasure of the emperor, was the principal cause of the weakness Pilate showed on this occasion. He had the authority in his own hands, he had a right to command, to be obeyed; and yet to legislate upon the wrongs of an innocent Man, he lowered himself to take the advice, or rather the law, of those who were the accusers and the most cruel enemies of that Man! Oh, into what an abyss do we not plunge ourselves when we cleave too much to the possessions, honours, employments, and offices of this world! We make idols of these possessions, honours, employments; and rather than let them go and lose them, we would sacrifice our duty, our conscience, our soul, our GOD, our eternity! What woe! and yet how common! Thyself hast, alas, oftentimes acted more or less like Pilate! How often hast thou, for

the sake of not displeasing a friend, or some person whose good or ill will was of moment to thee, unhesitatingly taken the line of doing evil, and of displeasing GOD Himself? How often, rather than lose a party of pleasure or forego an interesting occupation, hast thou omitted thy spiritual exercises and religious duties! How often, in order not to be turned into ridicule, or to avoid some slight raillery, hast thou tried to seem irreligious upon some occasion, at the risk of doing spiritual injury to those who knew thee! Lastly, how often, to preserve the vain esteem of the world, for a vile interest, or for some yet more contemptible motive, hast thou not trampled under foot the law of JESUS CHRIST, forsaken His service, and said like the Jews, not in words, but by thine actions, "Glory be to sin! Let JESUS die! Let me rather lose GOD than that small gratification! Let JESUS be crucified, so that sin may reign in my soul!" Oh, what cause for bitter regrets!

2. Resolve, therefore, to be the true disciple of JESUS CHRIST! break the fetters which might keep thee back from being henceforth wholly His. When it is in question to do something to His glory, to prove thy love and to work out thy salvation, be resolute to show a courage which will endure every trial; be resolute to sacrifice every kind of human interest, and even thy life, rather than lose His grace by a mortal sin. JESUS is thy GOD, thy SAVIOUR, thy Father, thy Friend; He is thy treasure, thy consolation, thy support, thy greatest good! Oh, be no longer so weak as, in the moment of temptation, to cry out, "Crucify Him!" but be faithful to Him to the end,

even shouldst thou have thereby to suffer here all imaginable evils ; and as thou canst do nothing of thyself, have recourse to prayer, and GOD will help thee, sustain thee, and give thee the victory.

Colloquy.—O HOLY SPIRIT, Thou Who didst enrich the first Christians with a wonderful gift of strength, whereby they received courage to go forward to meet death and cruel tortures rather than offend Thee, vouchsafe to remember that I also am called by Thy Name, and that none have greater need than I to be strengthened by Thy grace. Cold and lethargic in Thy service, I have, alas, too often given way before human respect, and through fear of the obstacles to be encountered in Thy service, for which cause I have been guilty of a thousand offences ; but from to-day I resolve to lose everything rather than offend Thee. I will never more neglect my religious duties through disinclination, or idleness, or sloth, or for fear of the remarks of others. What I desire, O my GOD, what I prize above all created things, are Thy grace and love. Grant me the happiness of possessing both these, and I shall be rich enough ! Cause me to please Thee in all things, and I shall be quite indifferent as to displeasing the world and those that belong to it. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Pilate, alarmed at the tumultuous vociferations of the concourse of people who were furiously demanding the crucifixion of JESUS, sought to appease them by yielding to a portion of their demands. He therefore set Barabbas free, and ordered that JESUS should be scourged.

1. Measure the whole extent of the grief which JESUS felt when He heard that sentence given forth which condemned Him to a degrading torment,—He Who was innocent, and acknowledged such by His judge,—a torment destined only for slaves ; and the more cruel in that it was to be inflicted by those who had vowed a blind and savage hatred against Him. But observe likewise the meekness, peace of mind, and silence wherewith our gracious LORD accepted this cruel sentence. He showed no sign of alteration of soul ; He complained not of the injustice done to Him ; He submitted silently to the barbarous command of His judge. Is it thus thou actest ? Dost thou with like calmness and meekness maintain thyself whensoever thou art so unjustly accused or condemned ? With what eagerness seekest thou not to vent thy indignation, and revenge thyself ! How harsh, bitter, and offensive are then thy words ! Learn again, therefore, from thy Divine Master, to overcome thy too ardent passions, which are ever too ready to break out. Accustom thyself to receive the ill-treatment of men with the same resignation as He did Who willed to endure for thee such hard and numerous outrages.

2. Wilt thou know why JESUS so calmly heard the unjust sentence which condemned Him to be scourged ? It was that He regarded it as proceeding from the mouth of His heavenly FATHER. Therefore, with heroic obedience, He submitted to it. “ O My FATHER,” did He inwardly say, “ I am ready to receive the stripes from what hand soever they may come, because Thou hast ordained it. I will only

that which Thou wilt." O Christian, such should be the feelings of thy mind in thy afflictions ! Thy heart should be submissive to the will of GOD, as was that of JESUS. Thou shouldst be ready to receive from the hand of thy loving FATHER whatever chastisement it please Him to send : thou shouldst humbly accept from Him every evil which may befall thee, bear it with courage, and make a holy use of it for thy own sanctification, for the edification of thy neighbour, and the greater glory of the LORD. Is it thus thou hast hitherto acted ?

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Who art innocence itself, lo ! Thou art condemned to the punishment of malefactors, yet Thou dost not complain ; Thou receivest it with patience, without saying a word, and in a spirit of penitence for my sins. It is thus Thou teachest me to accept for love of Thee, and as the penalty of my iniquities, all the wrongs, ill-treatment, injustice, and persecution whereof I may be the object. For the future, O my GOD, I will accept them as being sent by Thee for the purpose of chastening me as I have so often deserved. Though the persons who do me wrong are men like myself, yet I know that Thou hast selected them to be the ministers of Thy will ; therefore I should accept the evil they do me as coming straight from Thee, and submit thereto with humble resignation. Such is the penitence Thou requirest from me : I accept it, O my GOD, for love of Thee. Grant that always and every where Thy will may be done in me. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

When the Jews heard from Pilate's lips the command given to scourge JESUS CHRIST, they shouted with joy, and, like hungry wolves, they threw themselves with great fury on that meek Lamb, dragged Him violently into a spacious hall, and there they stripped Him of all His clothes, so that there remained no covering upon His sacred body.

1. Great was the shame which our Divine SAVIOUR suffered, when thus exposed in nakedness to the mockery of a vile and infamous populace. Of all the agonies of His Passion, that of having been several times stripped of all His clothing, and thus exposed to the gaze of a whole people, was certainly one of the greatest. Compassionate the shame which JESUS suffered herein. Naked, and yet He it is Who clothes the sun with light and splendour, and who causes the stars to shine in the heavens, with a magnificence which nothing equals; naked, and He it is Who covers the birds with feathers, the sheep with fleece, the trees with leaves, the fields with verdure, the gardens with flowers; naked, and He it is Who gives to men the purple, and silk, and fine linen, wherewith they adorn themselves; He it is Who clothes the Angels with mantles of honour and glory. He was naked, and it was for thy salvation, to prove to thee all His love, that He willed to be thus stripped. It was to teach thee to strip thyself of the evil habits which tyrannise over thee, of the many degrading passions of which thou art perhaps the slave, the many sins wherewith thou art covered from head to

foot. Profit by so useful a lesson, cast away whatever in thee may displease the eyes of GOD, make a sincere confession to Him, shake off thy lukewarmness, and beseech the LORD to strip from thee Himself the hideous garment of thy iniquities, to cover thee with the glorious mantle of His love and of His merits.

2. Behold, too, in the nakedness of JESUS CHRIST, the image of thine own spiritual nakedness. Alas ! thou hast not any one virtue, or else thou hast but very imperfect ones ; thy soul is like a dry and barren soil ; thou art destitute of those sentiments of faith, confidence, contrition and love, which the saints had ; scarcely conceivest thou those desires of Christian perfection whereunto thou art called, and which form the portion of the true friends of GOD. Oh, be confounded at thy great poverty of spiritual things, and ask JESUS graciously to enrich thee with His divine grace, to clothe thee with holiest virtue, and to enable thee to appear in His Presence at the day of judgment, not sad and confounded with the sense of thy spiritual nudity, but filled with sweet joy, by reason of the numberless merits wherewith He will adorn thy soul, and in the hope of eternal glory.

Colloquy.—O GOD, Whose riches are infinite, my soul turns to Thee, that Thou mayest clothe it with Thy gifts, and adorn it with Thy grace. I am ashamed, because I am destitute of all virtue, and I fear to be found unworthy of paradise at the day of judgment. By the merits of that shame which my Divine Redeemer endured at the time of His scourging, adorn my soul, O my GOD, with holy thoughts

and with knowledge of heavenly things. Adorn it with Thy divine love, and with all Christian virtues. Have compassion on my spiritual nakedness, and vouchsafe O Thou Who possessest all treasures of heaven and earth, to enrich my poor soul with Thy most precious gifts, and to make it pleasing in Thy sight. Once more, O my God, have pity on my miseries, and come to the help of my poverty. If there be found some good thing in me, to Thee I will render thanks, and praise Thee everlastingly in this world and the next. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF TEMPTATIONS.

1. If we are tempted, it is a sign that we are loved of GOD, the HOLY SPIRIT tells us.¹ Those who have been the most loved of GOD, have been the most exposed to temptation. Because thou wast pleasing to GOD, the Angel said to Tobias, it was necessary that thou shouldst be tried by temptation.

2. Ask not of GOD that thou be freed from temptations, but ask of Him grace that thou yield not to them, and that thou fulfil His holy will. He who refuses to fight, renounces the crown. Trust in GOD, and GOD will fight within thee, with thee, and for thee.

3. "Besides," says S. Francis de Sales, "these temptations which are so importunate, come to us from the malice of the devil; but the trial and suf-

¹ S. James i. 12.

ferring which they occasion come to us from the mercy of God, Who, against the will of His enemy, draws forth holy tribulation from his malice. Therefore, I say this: Thy temptations proceed from the devil and hell; but thy trials and afflictions proceed from God and Paradise; the mothers are of Babylon, but the daughters are of Jerusalem." Despise temptation, therefore, and open the whole soul to this trial which God sends thee, to purify thee in this life, and crown thee in eternity.

4. "Let the wind blow," says the same saint again, "and imagine not that the rustling of the leaves be the clang of arms." Be quite assured that all the temptations of hell shall not trouble a heart which loves them not. The Apostle S. Paul endured some that were terrible, and God would not take them from him, and dealt thus in love. Remember that God is a Father infinitely good and compassionate, and that He suffers not the devil to harass His children, excepting so far as their merits and their reward shall be thereby enhanced.

5. The longer the temptation continues, the more clear it is that thou hast not consented to it. "It is a good sign," says S. Francis de Sales, "that there is so much noise and tempestuousness beating against the will, for it shows that the will is not in it." They lay not siege to a fortress which is already within their power; and so long as the assault continues unmitigated, we know that resistance is persevered in.

6. Thou fearest to be overcome at the very moment thou art gaining the victory. Thy fear proceeds from

this, that thou confusest the impression of the temptation with consent; and mistaking a passive state of the imagination for an act of the will, thou thinkest thou hast yielded to temptation because thou hast felt it keenly. The imagination generally wanders beyond the limits of our control. S. Jerome had withdrawn to the desert, and his imagination brought before him exciting objects; his body was chilled by severe mortifications, and yet the fire of concupiscence kindled and tortured his heart. In these fearful conflicts, the holy anchorite suffered but sinned not; he was tormented, but not guilty: on the contrary, the greater his trial was, the more was he pleasing to God.

7. One, when tempted, was wont to say to the phantoms of his imagination, "I see you, but I do not look at you." "I cannot help seeing you, because it depends not on myself if my imagination fling before my eyes that which I wish not to see; but I look not at you, because my will repudiates and rejects these images." "The essence of sin," says S. Augustine, "consists so much in its being voluntary, that if it ceases to be voluntary, it ceases to be sin."

8. Sometimes the human senses are so powerfully attracted towards the object which the imagination brings before them, that the will appears to have been drawn into and absorbed in a sort of fascination. But it is not so; the will has suffered, but has not yielded; it has been buffeted and wounded, but not vanquished. This is the state which S. Paul describes as the warring of the flesh against the spirit, and the perpetual wrestling of both. The soul in this wrestling ex-

periences strange sensations, but consents not to what she feels: she passes through them pure, even as substances which are covered with a layer of oil come out of the water without retaining a drop of it.

9. If it should often happen that thou hast not a distinct consciousness of thy mastery over temptations, know that GOD denies thee this satisfaction, in order that obedience, serving thee as a light, may supply the deficiency.

10. To constitute a deadly sin, there must be the union of three things: 1. if the nature of the sin be heavy; 2. if the mind have a full consciousness of the guilt of the action we indulge in, or of the peril of the occasion to which we expose ourselves; 3. if the will decide voluntarily, or by a guilty preference in favour of the forbidden action, or guilty omission, or dangerous occasion. These reflections may serve to reassure thy soul, if the dread of having mortally sinned should come to trouble it; because the union of these three conditions is not readily met with in a soul which has the fear of GOD; but perfect security can, and ought, only to proceed from obedience.

11. In temptations against faith and purity, stop not to make an effort to realise those virtues; but turn towards GOD a look of affection, without speaking even to that compassionate Friend of the thought which afflicts thee, for fear of giving more consistency to it by words. Apply thyself to some outward occupation, or go on with the one thou art engaged in without vexing thyself, without replying to the tempter, as though his assault had not reached thee. Thou wilt thus discomfit him, and maintain thyself in peace.

12. Shouldst thou be assailed by temptations throughout thy whole life, be not thereby troubled : thy strength shall increase in proportion to thy trials, and thy crown shall be the more beautiful. Only be firm in the resolution to despise the assaults of the tempter.

13. The wisest theologians and masters of the spiritual life are agreed in saying that simple contempt of temptation is a more efficacious way of rejecting it than words or deeds of the contrary virtues. Read attentively on this subject the 3rd and 4th chapters of *Introduction to the Devout Life*; there thou wilt find great enlightenment and much consolation. See also the 12th chapter of the *Spiritual Combat*, and the 6th, 7th, 12th, 20th, 29th, 55th, and 59th of the third book of the *Imitation*.

MEDITATION XXIV.

JESUS BOUND TO A COLUMN AND CRUELLY SCOURGED.

FIRST SUBJECT.

WHEN JESUS CHRIST had been stripped of His garments, His tormentors dragged Him to the foot of a marble pillar, and there, without the least resistance on the part of the SAVIOUR, they bound Him with cords and thongs.

1. Marvel at the wonderful resignation wherewith JESUS suffered His tormentors to bind Him. These ruffians tightened the cords with so much violence and cruelty, that we may suppose that they entered into His flesh, even to the bones, so that they were no

longer seen, and that blood issued at every pore. Meditate on this Divine Master bound to the pillar as a slave, and surrounded by a crowd of idlers and gazers, who had assembled to witness His scourging. He was the King of Heaven and earth, the whole universe acknowledged His sovereign dominion and obeyed Him ; and yet, behold ! full of meekness and humility, with eyes modestly bent, He yielded unresistingly to these vile soldiers, obeyed all their caprices, and patiently awaited the stripes which were soon to fall upon Him. Behold, He curses them not, He makes them no reproach, He utters no word of malediction ; but, like an innocent lamb, He is silent and prepares to endure great torments for thee, and to satisfy His Eternal FATHER for thy sins. Oh, what cause hast thou not to love the GOD Who has thus loved thee, and to dedicate thyself irrevocably to His service !

2. Reflect on thy little obedience to thy spiritual and temporal superiors, on thy obstinacy, on thy pride and self-sufficiency, thou who thinkest thyself fit to guide and to govern thyself unaided ; and, beholding our LORD obeying those who were going to take away His life, learn to accept correction from those who desire thy good and the salvation of thy soul ; obey them promptly, not only outwardly, by punctually performing all that they command thee, but likewise inwardly, by doing it without murmuring or complaining. Obedience is sometimes painful, I confess ; it sometimes costs nature much to submit ; but nevertheless obey, and thereby thou wilt become pleasing to GOD, and wilt arrive surely and soon at a high degree of perfection.

Colloquy.—O Lamb of GOD! O most perfect Pattern of obedience, I am ready to obey in all Thou commandest; I will also obey my superiors, and be henceforth governed by their will. Be far from me, O my GOD, a spirit of independence, self-will, and murmuring. Since Thou willest to obey even Thy tormentors, I will learn from Thine example that obedience is the surest and speediest path whereby to reach heaven. Thou art my sovereign LORD; Thou hast thus the right to impose on me all the laws Thou wilt, and to set over me whatever superiors Thou choosest; my duty is to submit to Thy commands and theirs. This I will henceforth do to my last breath, firmly trusting that Thou wilt help me by Thy grace in the practice of obedience. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Our Divine SAVIOUR was no sooner bound to the pillar, than the ruffians, throwing themselves with fury on Him, showered down on every part of His body a storm of stripes.

1. The torment of the scourging was extreme in every way. First, by its duration. Secondly, by the nature of the instruments of that torment: for they were very hard thongs of knotted cord, bound with little iron chains. Thirdly, by the number of blows, which were, one might say, innumerable. Indeed, if, according to the law of the Romans, the number of stripes was to be proportioned to the crimes committed, JESUS CHRIST having been scourged for all the sins of the whole world, it is impossible to say how many He received; assuredly that Divine Master was

wounded from head to foot. Fourthly, by reason of the cruelty of the executioners, which rose higher every minute, being excited to emulate one another. He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed.

2. Oh, how agonising was this torment of the scourging to JESUS! His pain was insupportable, and each fresh blow was sufficient to lay Him dead. But as He thought of thee, and loved thee, He was contented to be reduced to this dreadful condition, because therein He found the means to expiate thy sins of impurity. How many, alas, hast thou not committed for many years! and yet what degree of penitence hast thou shown hitherto? what mortifications hast thou inflicted on thyself? Alas, thou treatest thy rebellious flesh with the greatest tenderness, whereas thou shouldst continually mortify it, by reason of all the iniquities it causes thee to commit; but thou canst not bear to make it suffer, and tendest it as if thou hadst no cause to fear it. Learn, then, as a true disciple of JESUS CHRIST, to subdue thy corrupt flesh by self-denials and penitence, that it may no longer rebel, and that, mastering its strayings, thou mayest run by the path of GOD's commandments towards that integrity and perfection of life which should shine forth in a true Christian.

Colloquy.—O my Divine Master, Thou Whose sacred body, for love of me, was all covered with wounds and bruises, teach me how to treat my body of clay and sin, and teach me to mortify it as I ought by peni-

tence. But at the same time, I beseech Thee, O gracious JESUS, by the merits of the cruel agonies Thou enduredst in Thy dreadful scourging, to grant me the gift of strength, that I may have courage to control my flesh by fasting and self-denials. This corrupt flesh rebels day by day against Thee, and urges me incessantly to offend Thee. Help me to chastise it, and deprive it of that great vigour wherewith it harasses and vanquishes my soul. I will lay aside all those self-indulgences and methods of ease which are not needful to me. Sustain me in my good resolutions. Once more, O JESUS, grant me the spirit of penitence, whereof I have sore need, to vanquish the unbridled desires of my evil nature, and to satisfy Thy offended justice. I will henceforth hate my flesh with holy hatred, that I may love Thee. If it be furious and rebel, I will treat it as a slave; if it submit to grace, I will treat it as a brother. Cause, O GOD, that my spirit may always be the master, and that nothing may hinder me when it is in question to serve Thee and dedicate to Thee all my love. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

When this cruel slaughter had come to an end, the ruffians, weary with scourging the SAVIOUR, unbound Him from the pillar. The cords which sustained that Innocent One being cut, it has been thought that He fell in His blood, and remained for some time extended on the ground motionless and half-dead. But so pitiable a sight could not soften hearts harder than stone. The executioners compelled JESUS to arise and to clothe Himself with His garments, which He could

only do, by reason of His great weakness, with infinite difficulty, and with renewed sufferings.

1. Transport thyself in imagination to the place of scourging ; behold thy JESUS all in blood, and dragging Himself painfully along the ground to take up His garments scattered here and there in the hall. See how pain makes His every limb tremble ! see the tears which flow from His eyes ! Cast likewise a look upon His tormentors, who make a sport of loading Him with sarcasms, mockeries, and blows, as though He had been the most vile thing on earth ; and remember that He Who was thus treated like a worm of the earth is the same Who reigns in Heaven, and Who, with one look alone, causes the earth to shake in its foundations. Wherefore, then, did He consent to be reduced to such a degree of misery, confusion, and degradation ? It was because He loved thee, and would prove to thee the whole extent of His love. Yes, for thee it was that He was scourged ; to expiate thy sins His body was torn with stripes ; to quench the flames of hell, which thou didst merit, He consented to shed His blood and suffer indescribable pain. Let thy heart, then, become filled with affectionate sentiments of compassion for so gracious a Master ; and acknowledging how ill thou hast hitherto responded to so much love, and how ungrateful thou hast shown thyself for so great a blessing, weep for thy sins, ask forgiveness for them, and sincerely resolve for the future to be more worthy of JESUS, and to lead a life holier and more conformable to His Gospel.

2. Learn, lastly, to receive with patience and humi-

lity the strokes wherewith it may please the LORD to smite thee, even as JESUS CHRIST received those which were so cruelly inflicted on Him by His enemies ; and although thou feel a natural repugnance towards all which wounds thee, yet beseech the LORD to punish thee in this life for thy sins : so that when thou reachest the end of thy course, thy soul may be entirely purified from all its stains, and be in a state to take its flight to Heaven.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, full of love, to what an excess of charity hast Thou not been drawn ! Thou gavest up Thy body to the strokes of the most savage scourging ! Thou gavest up Thy soul to the deepest shame and confusion ! I thank Thee with my whole heart for that exceeding love of Thine. I offer to Thee every drop of the precious blood which Thou didst shed for me ; and I beseech Thee to give me, through its merit, strength to chastise my body in this world, and to prevent the eternal punishment to which Thy justice would certainly condemn me if I should neglect to appease it. I deserve every sort of evil for having outraged Thy glory ; and I accept in a spirit of penitence and expiation all the sorrow Thou art pleased to send me. I infinitely prefer that Thou shouldst purify me from my iniquities in this world with the mercy of a Father, rather than in the other, where Thou wouldest punish me with all the severity of an angry judge. Strike me, then, in this life, LORD, but spare me in eternity. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF HUMILITY, AND THE MEANS OF ACQUIRING IT.

It is a constant and undoubted verity, that there will be no mercy nor entrance into the kingdom of Heaven for the proud, and that the LORD will only admit the humble there. Holy Scripture teaches us that GOD resisteth the proud,—that He abaseth those who exalt themselves,—that we must become like little children to enter into His glory,—that those who do not become thus shall be excluded therefrom; and, in short, that He sheds His favours alone upon the humble, and exalts them only.

This admitted, thou canst not be sufficiently convinced of the importance of striving to become humble, and of banishing from thy mind all presumption, vanity, and pride. There are no efforts thou shouldst not put forth to succeed in so holy an undertaking; and as it is not possible for thee to succeed without GOD's grace, thou must ask it earnestly, and at all hours of the day.

Every Christian has contracted at baptism an obligation to walk in the steps of JESUS CHRIST, and it is to this divine Pattern that we should conform our lives. This GOD and SAVIOUR carried humility so far as to become the object of the scorn and contempt of men, in order to cure the swelling and wound of our pride, teaching us by His own example to tread the important path which alone leads to Heaven. Thou therefore, O disciple of this Divine Master, if thou desirest to acquire this precious pearl of humility,

which is the surest sign of predestination, receive with a docile spirit the advice I give thee, and put it faithfully in practice.

1. Open the eyes of thy soul, and consider that of thyself thou hast nothing for which thou shouldst esteem and exalt thyself. In thyself thou art nothing but sin, falsehood, and misery ; and as for the gifts of grace and nature which are in thee, as they come from GOD, the origin of thy being, from whom thou hast received them, it is to Him alone that the honour and glory belong.

2. Hence conceive a deep consciousness of thy nothingness, and preserve it ever in thy heart, with profound shame that any pride should reign within thee. Be persuaded that there is nothing so vain and ridiculous as to seek to be esteemed for that pre-eminence which we have not ourselves, but which is lent to us by the gratuitous bounty of the Creator ; for, as the Apostle says, if thou hast received it, why dost thou glory as though thou hadst not received it ?

3. Let the remembrance of thy past sins never leave thy mind. Know, above all, that the sin of pride is an abominable thing : that there is no evil on earth or in hell to be compared to it. It was pride which ruined the angels in Heaven and cast them down to hell ; it is pride which has corrupted the whole human race, and which has drawn down on earth that infinite number of woes which will last till the end of the world, or, to say more truly, throughout eternity. In fine, a soul defiled with sin is worthy alone of hatred, contempt, and punishment. Hence conclude in what estimation thou shouldst hold

thyself after being guilty of so great a number of sins.

4. Think besides, that there is no crime, however enormous and detestable, of which thou art not capable, and towards which thy corrupt nature is not inclined; and that it is only through the mercy of God and the help of His grace that thou hast been preserved hitherto: as S. Augustine has said in that memorable sentence, “There is no sin which has been committed by one man but which any other man might commit, if the Hand which made him should cease to sustain him.” Bewail inwardly this thy deplorable condition, and draw from it a firm resolution never to take any other place than that of the most unworthy sinner.

5. Always choose, as the Gospel enjoins, the last and lowest place, and be sincerely convinced that it is the one due to thee: and in all the wants of life select ever for thyself the things most inconvenient, as being of all the least important; endeavour at all times to feel that others deserve to have the best of every thing, and thyself the worst, by reason of thy great unworthiness, and desire with all thy heart that it may be thus in all cases.

6. Abstain, as from a great evil, from ever judging others in any way; try rather to put a favourable construction on all they say and do; ponder it over and conclude with earnest charity that there are reasons for excusing or defending them, and become, as it were, the advocate of thy neighbour. If such a thing be impossible, from the evil being too evident, still excuse him as far as thou canst by attri-

buting his fault to some inadvertency, or to his being taken by surprise, or to the strength of temptation and the malice of the devil who seduced him, or to some other motive; at least, turn thy mind away from thinking of it, if it be not thy office to remedy it. This practice is another very abundant source of true humility.

7. At the first movement of a thought of pride, vanity, or self-love, turn speedily to the LORD, beseech Him to defend His honour, and not to permit thee to rob Him of it by attributing aught to thyself.

8. Be glad to ask advice of others; be willing to receive instruction even from those who do not seem suited to give it thee; and thank those who reprove thee, inasmuch as they help to correct thee.

9. Avoid singularity and affectation; seek not to be thought more highly of than others; if thou hast some natural defects, rejoice, inasmuch as they may greatly assist thee in practising humility.

10. Never despise any one. The greatest sinner may be converted and become a saint, whilst thou mayst become a reprobate.

11. Beware lest pride be the source of the evil thou sometimes sayest of thyself. S. Francis de Sales disapproves of our speaking of ourselves at all, either good or evil, unless a real necessity constrain us.

12. Before reproving others, when thy duty calls thee to do so, humble thyself by remembering inwardly that in many ways thou art guiltier than they.

13. When thou art unjustly reproved, be not irritated; and remember that if thou art not guilty of

the actual fault thou art accused of, thou art of a multitude of others.

14. When thou art offended, be not the last to seek reconciliation. Be reconciled, at all events, in thy heart, should prudence not permit thee to make the first advances.

15. Look not for gratitude for the services thou renderest ; but believe that, in obliging others thou dost no more than thy duty.

16. In a word, if thou sincerely desirest to become humble, accept eagerly all the humiliations which may cross thy path, and embrace them courageously. We can become humble only by exercising ourselves in humility, and we can never exercise ourselves in humility, but by willingly accepting humiliations.

MEDITATION XXV.

JESUS IS CROWNED WITH THORNS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

JESUS having gone through the torment of the scourging and put on His garments, the thought suggested itself to the soldiers who were the executioners, to give to themselves, and to the other soldiers of Pilate's palace, a diversion worthy of their cruelty, and the idea of which they conceived from the crime which was imputed to their prisoner. He had been accused of wishing to make Himself a king, and of calling Himself King of the Jews ; so they thought of making

Him a mock king, and of representing the ceremony of His coronation. They led JESUS, then, from the place where He had been scourged into the inner court of the judgment-hall, where the soldiers remained, and when the whole cohort was assembled, they violently tore off from the Divine SAVIOUR the robe He wore, and in bloody derision put over His shoulders an old purple cloak all in rags, in semblance of a royal mantle: and as a crown was wanting to this mock king, they plaited one with very sharp thorns, put it on His head, and pressed it down violently, in order that the thorns should enter deeply into His flesh, and put Him to further torture.

1. Reflect on all that JESUS had to endure from this fiend-like diversion of the soldiers. As His clothes already stuck to the recent wounds He had received in the scourging, it was a terrible renewal of pain to Him when they were torn off. Therefore His Blood began to flow again from all parts. But our LORD spoke not a word, nor breathed a sigh, neither did He offer any resistance. He let Himself be led, stripped, clothed at their will. Thereby He expiated the effeminacy of thy body, the voluptuousness of thy guilty flesh, the luxuriousness of thy apparel, the vanity thou feelest therein, and the pride it inspires thee with. Thereby He merited for thee the grace of penitence and mortification, the grace to despise the world, its pomps, and all its glory. Beseech this Divine Master graciously to apply to thee the merits of His sufferings, and to give thee the spirit of mortification and chastity.

2. Consider, secondly, all that JESUS had to endure

when they crowned Him with thorns. This torment was one of the greatest of His Passion. The head is full of nerves and delicate membranes, of which the sensitiveness is excessive; and I ask thee, what must have been the cruel agony of our LORD when He felt the sharp points of the thorns penetrating into every part of the flesh of His head? Many saints suppose that CHRIST must have sustained Himself by a miracle not to have died under that torment. Thereby He expiated that desire to domineer which is in thee, which constantly leads thee to exalt thyself above others. He expiated likewise the many other sins thou hast conceived, nurtured, and entertained in thy criminal head, in thy memory and imagination. He expiated, moreover, the idolatrous care thou hast bestowed so frequently upon the adorning of thy head, to show it off, and cause it to be admired. Moreover, He merited for thee the grace of humility, meekness, and patience.

3. Cast thine eyes upon JESUS crowned with thorns, and see what a difference exists between thee and thy divine Pattern. Thou wilt suffer nothing; thou hatest all that is the least restraint; thou lovest ease and repose; and it is with the greatest possible difficulty that thou consentest to impose any sacrifice on thyself, when thy conscience compels thee to it. Ah, know that delicate members are out of place beneath a head crowned with thorns; and that he who would be a disciple of JESUS should always imitate Him in His love of suffering. Know that whoever would be one day crowned with glory with JESUS in Heaven, must resign himself to be first crowned on

earth with thorns and tribulation. Hast thou ever thought of this seriously?

Colloquy.—O King of sorrow! my sins have been the cause of all the torments of which I behold Thee the Victim. It was my avarice which reduced Thee to nakedness; my shameful sins covered Thee with wounds; my impatience caused the blood to issue from all Thy veins; my pride caused Thy ignominy. I detest all these sins, because they were the unhappy occasion of all Thy sufferings; I detest them solely for Thy sake, and because with my whole heart I love Thee. I rejoice with Thee that Thy sorrows are over and that they have been changed into infinite glory to Thee, and endless happiness. Grant me grace to mortify my body, to bring it into subjection, to treat it as a slave ever ready to rebel, and to spare it no labour here, that through Thy merits I may likewise obtain after this life the repose of Paradise. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

It sufficed not to the soldiers to have placed a crown of thorns on the head of JESUS. Wishing to complete their horrible amusement, they made Him sit down on a block of marble, which was near them in the hall, as if it were on a throne; and taking a reed, they put it in His hands, to serve as a sceptre. JESUS refused nothing; He accepted the ridiculous sceptre offered to Him, and held it as they desired.

1. Thou condemnest the insolent conduct of these soldiers, who in derision gave to the SAVIOUR a reed for a sceptre, and yet thou imitatatest this conduct every day. A reed has a certain external appearance

of solidity, and consistency ; but if it be closely examined, one easily perceives that this appearance is deceitful, and that being hollow, it is weak and fragile. Is it not thus with most of the good works thou offerest to JESUS ? In appearance they seem excellent, perfectly worthy of a true Christian, and full of the Spirit of God ; but when they are weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, they are found hollow, blamable, and even worthy of punishment. Perhaps thou hast hitherto thought to give to thy Divine Master the golden sceptre of thy labours, mortifications, prayers, and virtues ; but almost all thine actions having been performed without a pure and upright intention, without the single desire to please God, as a matter of form, or through vanity or self-will, thou hast, alas ! for the most part, given Him only a hollow, worthless reed. Humble thyself for thy spiritual poverty ; ask forgiveness of JESUS CHRIST for having hitherto so rarely done anything for His glory ; and resolve henceforth so to purify thy intentions, that all thy actions may become good works in reality ; not only in the eyes of men who may be easily deceived, but also in the eyes of Him “ Who trieth the reins and the heart.”

2. The reed which the soldiers gave to JESUS for a sceptre is the image of the delusive hopes of this life. The world promises great things to its votaries ; it complacently spreads before them riches, honours, and all which flatters pride and sense ; but what is all this ?—a little vapour which seems resplendent for a few minutes, and then vanishes for ever. Know this for certain : that when thou shalt have served the world

all the years of thy life, it will never be able to give thee more than a frail reed ; thou wilt never receive from it anything which is solid and durable ; and the reward of all the fatigue thou hast gone through for it will be emptiness. Be wise enough, therefore, to comprehend the foolishness of those who love the world. Be resolute enough to despise it ; renounce its vain joys, and cast away the delusive good it offers thee. Cling to God alone. He will never fail thee ; He will never forget what thou dost to serve Him ; and the reward He will give thee for thy faithfulness to His service will be a splendid and eternal reward.

Colloquy.—O my God, henceforth I will do every action to Thy glory, and no more to please the world which deserves nothing from me. I will serve Thee only : because there is none but Thou Who eternally recompensest the devotion of those who are Thine.

It is in Thee I place all my hopes, because I am sure Thou wilt never disappoint them. All I shall henceforth do, all I say, all I may suffer, I will do, say, and suffer for Thy sake. Vouchsafe to purify my soul from earthly affections, to bind me closely to Thyself, that nothing may ever again separate me from Thy love. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

So many indignities satisfied not yet the cruelty of the soldiers. They came in great numbers to surround the Divine SAVIOUR ; then, to make sport of Him, they bent the knee, one after the other, and saluted Him, saying, “ Hail, King of the Jews ! ” Then they spat on His face ; they buffeted Him ; and

seizing the reed He held in His hand, they smote Him on the head therewith, thus using His sceptre to rivet still more firmly His crown.

1. Such was the brutality of the soldiers ; and great were the ever-renewed sufferings of JESUS ! Who can conceive the greatness of His torment ? Suppose a thorn were to make its way, even slightly, into thy head, what torture would it not be to thee ! How speedily wouldest thou send for a surgeon to extract it, and give thee ease ! But lo ! thy Divine SAVIOUR has His head pierced in every part ; the thorns are touched and moved every minute ; they are pushed in violently with heavy blows : what martyrdom ! O my SAVIOUR, is it to this degree Thou hast loved me ? at this price hast Thou redeemed my soul ? I will render Thee love for love ! I will, at whatever price, save my soul, which cost Thee so dear ! Therefore I will mortify my senses and my passions ; I will bear with calmness and resignation all the sorrows of this life ; I will detach my heart from all creatures, and will strive to please thee in all things.

2. Marvel at the all-divine patience wherewith JESUS CHRIST bore the outrages whereof He was the Victim during the crowning with thorns. He had not His eyes bound as when before Caiaphas ; He beheld the insulting homage paid to Him ; He saw the blows preparing for Him, but yet no fear ever caused Him, by a movement, to avoid them, or diminish their violence. When they snatched the reed from His hand He yielded : and when it was given back to Him, He took it. He suffered all in profound silence, and as though He were unconscious. Had the soldiers

reflected for a while on so extraordinary a patience, they might have had misgivings of some mystery, and they might have feared to go too far ; but, on the contrary, that patience upon which they did not reflect increased their insolence, and confirmed them in their inhumanity. What must have been their amazement and despair when, at the hour of their death, they knew that He Whom they had thus sacrilegiously treated was their GOD, their Creator, their Judge ! JESUS CHRIST still bears with our contempt, our insults, our blasphemies. GOD's patience, which leaves so many crimes unpunished on earth, hardens the wicked, but should make them tremble. Alas, how amazed wilt thou even be thyself, when thou shalt see the awful majesty of Him Whom thou servest so carelessly, Whom thou offendest so readily, and Whom thou slightest so frequently !

3. JESUS was saluted king by the soldiers of Pilate : but it was in mockery. Imitate them not, but remember that He is verily and indeed thy King, and in this quality thou must adore and serve Him. Moreover, strive to resemble Him in all things, if thou wouldst enter with Him into His kingdom. Walk in His footsteps ; and beholding His crown, His sceptre, and His purple, be not appalled by this greatness. He is the King of Holiness, and none can be His subject but by practising those virtues whereof He has set us such a glorious example. Another king will present himself to thee, crowned with roses, shining with glory, with a golden sceptre in his hand ! take heed not to follow him, he is an impostor, his brilliancy is but an illusion, his promises are lies, and the goal he would

lead thee to but a frightful gulf and eternal punishment. Follow the King of the Elect in His train, sustained by His strength, animated by His example ; encouraged by the greatness of the reward, thou shalt find in mortification, penitence, and sacrifice of pleasure, a more sensible consolation and a more solid happiness than in all the good things which the world, the flesh, and the devil can promise thee. JESUS thy King took upon Himself all there was most hard and painful ; but if some thorns yet remain in the path of holiness, and thou find them at times beneath thy feet, remember that they pierced thy SAVIOUR's head, and this thought will lead thee to suffer all patiently.

Colloquy.—O Monarch of heaven and earth, come, I beseech Thee, to reign in my soul ! Thou it is Who drewest it out of chaos, and Thou hast snatched it from the slavery of the devil ; therefore it is most right that Thou shouldst be its sovereign. I dedicate it to Thee without reservation, and beseech Thee to take entire and absolute possession of it. Make all its powers obey Thee : and as of myself I can do nothing good, accompany Thy commandments by a sweet constraining grace. I renounce the tyranny of the devil, the world, and the flesh. O Almighty GOD, establish Thy dominion in me, and suffer me not to have any other LORD but Thee ; that after serving Thee faithfully here on earth, I may one day be of the number of Thy children in heaven. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF CHRISTIAN PERFECTION.

1. The Christian is not obliged to be perfect, but to aim continually at perfection: that is, to labour incessantly, and with all his strength, to advance in virtue: not to strive to advance thus is to go back.
2. Now the way to strive towards perfection and to advance in virtue lies not in endlessly multiplying prayers, fasts, and other religious exercises.
3. Instead, therefore, of incessantly adding to thy religious practices, study to become perfect in the practice of those which are thy wonted habits, by devoting thyself to them with more affection and tranquillity of spirit, and with greater purity of intention. If it should even happen that thou canst not conveniently fulfil all thy customary devotional exercises, leave out a part of them, provided the rest be done with tranquillity. The spirit of perfection, says S. Bernard, consists not in doing great things, or in doing much, but in doing perfectly common and ordinary things.
4. Apply thyself, above all, to perfect thyself in the fulfilment of the duties of thy state, for it is therein that consists all perfection and holiness. When God created the world, He commanded the herbs to bear fruit, but each after its own kind. So likewise our souls are all bound to bring forth fruits of holiness, but each after its own kind, viz. according to the state wherein God has placed us. Elias in the desert, and David on the throne, were not called to be saints in

the same manner ; and Joshua in the midst of the tumult of arms would in vain have sought sanctification through the same means as Samuel in the peaceful retreat of the temple. This instruction is addressed to those who, dwelling in palaces, would lead the life of the wilderness. They would bear fruit excellent in itself, but from its not being of its own kind, the will of GOD would not be fulfilled.

5. The end of perfection is one and the same for all ; it is the love of GOD : but there are divers paths to the attainment of it. The saints themselves afford striking contrasts. One saint was never seen to laugh, whereas another laughed frequently, and was always seen actuated by a sweet and holy cheerfulness. One regarded it as an act of sensuality to change his sack-cloth ; and another was careful about extreme cleanliness of person, which she considered to be a symbol of purity of mind. If thou consult S. Jerome, thou wilt hear nothing from him but dread of the awful judgments of GOD ; but read S. Augustine, and thou wilt find only the language of confidence and love. The turn of the mind, the stamp of the character, vary in men as much as does the countenance ; grace perfects them by degrees, but changes not their nature. We must not, therefore, while attaching ourselves to the tone of mind of some particular saint, towards whom we feel more drawn, condemn that of other saints, but say with the Psalmist, “ Let every being that hath breath praise the LORD.”

6. Fear not that thou wilt fail to walk in the path of perfection, because thou art always troubled with faults, and fallest into omissions of duty. It has hap-

pened thus with the greatest saints, who, as S. Augustine declares, could all say with the Apostle S. John, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "One who came into the world by sin," says S. Gregory, "cannot dwell in it without sinning."

7. But it is one thing to love sin, another to fall into it through surprise and weakness. Affection to sin is alone the obstacle to perfection. Thus the most enlightened Fathers distinguish two sorts of lukewarmness; that which may be avoided, and that which is inevitable. The former is that of a soul which clings with affection to some sins; the other consists in falling thereinto through weakness and surprise, which has been the case even with great saints.

8. Instead, then, of being disquieted by these kinds of accidents inseparable from our nature, turn them to thy profit and to the increase of thy humility. It often happens, says S. Gregory the Great, that God suffers great faults to remain in souls which He loves, at the beginning of their spiritual life, that they may advance by that means in the knowledge of themselves, and learn to place all their trust in Him. "God," says S. Augustine, "preferred, in His infinite goodness, to cause good to come out of evil, rather than to prevent the evil itself." Thus, when thou hast learnt to gather fruits of humility from thy faults, thou respondest to the inscrutable ends of His ineffable providence.

9. If some fear assail thee that thou art not walking in the true way of perfection, consult with thy

pastor, and rest entirely upon what he says to thee. Where is the saint who has not had to suffer a similar dread? But all have become reassured by the consideration of God's goodness, and through obedience to their spiritual guide.

10. It is usually only after a long and painful journey that we arrive at scaling the mountain of perfection. There are statues which, to finish perfectly, have cost the artist more than thirty years' toil; now the perfecting of the soul is a much more difficult labour. We must, then, give ourselves to it with tranquillity, patience, and trust in God. We shall always obtain speedily enough what we desire, if we obtain it at the time when it shall please God to grant it to us.

MEDITATION XXVI.

BEHOLD THE MAN.

FIRST SUBJECT.

PILATE, having seen the pitiable condition to which the cruelty of the soldiers had reduced JESUS, hoped that if He thus showed Himself to the people, such a sight would touch their hearts with compassion. He commanded Him, therefore, to be brought, and he led Him out on the terrace of his palace, and showing Him to the assembled multitude, said, "Behold the Man!"

1. *Behold the Man!* How much is contained in that single word! Ye poor, ye infirm, ye unhappy

ones of every kind, behold the Man ! He suffered to teach you to suffer. He suffered to render your suffering meritorious. Murmur no longer at a condition which makes you like unto Him. Strive, while imitating Him, to conform yourselves entirely ; ground your resignation upon His resignation ; unite your sorrows to His sorrows ; He willed to precede you in the career of tribulation, that He might be your model in the same : by that path He reached His glory, and it is by the same path He leads you thither ; ye will reach it at last, if ye have imitated Him in the journey to it.

2. Sinners, behold the Man ! In the state to which ye see Him reduced, recognise your own work ; for it was ye who, by the hands of the soldiers, scourged, wounded, crowned, disfigured Him and shed His blood. Are you satisfied ? Think you ye have made Him suffer torments enough, loaded Him with sufficient indignity ? Does the sight of that Man of Sorrow touch your hearts or harden them ? At this grievous sight wilt thou stay this passion, break off that connexion, reform the evil habit, which so long caused torture to Him Who was GOD and MAN ? or wilt thou aggravate thy crimes, prepare Him a new torment, and cry out, with the brutal Jews, "Crucify Him !"

3. Ye penitents, behold the Man ! behold the penance He performed for your sins ! severe and terrible as it was, it demands something on your part ; and it is that which, after the example of the great Apostle, ye must fulfil yourselves. Without the penitence of the Divine SAVIOUR, thine own would be

unavailing ; without thine own, likewise, His would be useless to thee. It is His which makes thine acceptable : it is thine which will make His of avail to thee. Let the sight of His atonement sustain and encourage thy penitence, and teach thee the necessity and the manner of practising it.

4. Ye righteous, behold the man ! Behold the Head of the mystical body whereof ye are the true and faithful members. Behold the Model of the elect, and your own. Behold Him Whose Spirit has hitherto animated you, Whose precepts have guided you, Whose example has been your rule. As you have well begun, so persevere. Let the great token of love which He gave us more and more excite yours ; and let the sight of His constancy in the midst of His dreadful sufferings sustain your courage in whatever sufferings He may send you.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Man of Sorrows, Thou art the Divine Pattern of penitence, of patience, of sweetness, of humility, of charity, Whom I must unceasingly have before mine eyes, to impress these in my heart and practise them in my conduct. Unite me to Thy sufferings, so that I may share Thy grace. However rejected, unacknowledged, despised, I behold Thee, I own Thee for my King. Thy shame renders Thee yet more adorable in my eyes, more dear to my heart, more worthy to reign over me. Alas ! I have been to Thee hitherto but an ungrateful, unfaithful rebellious subject ; but I will become faithful to Thee till death, share Thy sorrows, imitate Thine example, and shun the false sweetness of the world. Would I take to myself its flowers, and leave Thee the thorns ? O

Sovereign King of my heart, I would have courage to say to Thee, Set Thy crown of shame upon my head, plant Thy sacred thorns in my heart, clothe me with Thy holy badge, but at least grant me a sincere resignation to all Thou commandest me. Receive, as my King, the homage I render Thee, that of a humble and contrite heart. Finally, vouchsafe one day to give me an entrance into Thy heavenly kingdom, there to praise and bless Thee for ever with Thine elect. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

The piteous state to which the executioners had reduced the most gracious SAVIOUR might have softened the hardest hearts; so touching a sight ought to have inspired the Jews with sentiments of pity and compassion towards the Redeemer. But scarcely had they perceived Him, than, seized with a fresh paroxysm of fury, they cried out with one voice, “Crucify Him! crucify Him!”

1. This infatuation of the Jews against a man from whom they had received only benefits is a thing truly incredible. We remain stupefied at the sight of a hatred so inveterate against an innocent man, a hatred which could only be pacified by His death. But that which should still more amaze and frighten us is, to see that a sinner who knows all that JESUS CHRIST has done and suffered for his soul’s salvation, can persevere and go on determinedly in his sin. He knows the greatness of GOD; he knows how good, and gracious, and worthy of love He is; he hears within himself the voice of the LORD promising him

Heaven as the recompence of his exertion ; but nothing moves or touches him. He loves his sin ; rather than forsake it, he prefers to forsake his GOD : and this is a blindness worthy to be wept over with tears of blood. Has not this been thy way of acting for long years ? At least was there not a time in thy life when thou wast thus obstinate in evil, despising the inspirations of Heaven ? Ask forgiveness of the LORD, and thank His mercy for having enlightened thee, and set thee once more in the paths of virtue ?

2. We may believe that our Divine SAVIOUR felt His soul wounded with very bitter grief when He heard these murderous cries raised against Him, and when He saw His beloved people more cruelly bent upon His destruction than the heathens themselves. But remember that often, and too often, thou hast thyself caused Him an affliction infinitely more bitter still ; and remember that each time thou hast committed any mortal sin, thou hast uttered a cry of death against Him, and hast made Heaven resound with these fatal words : “Crucify Him ! crucify Him !” Canst thou ever shed tears enough for such a crime ? Oh, there is nothing short of the great mercy of God which can forgive thee ! and if, as thou hopest, His infinite mercy have already done so, yet cease not to mourn for thy sins all the days of thy life. Beseech unceasingly our gracious SAVIOUR to forget thy ingratitude, be not weary of bringing forth deeds of penitence, and strive to repair it by redoubled fervour and love.

Colloquy.—O my SAVIOUR JESUS, I repent with my whole heart of having mingled my voice with

those of the perfidious Jews who required Thy death. Confounded at my great ingratitude, I cast myself at Thy feet humbly to ask Thy forgiveness. O gentle LORD, do Thou live and reign henceforth in my heart. I will now serve Thee with faithfulness and courage. I will take every opportunity of pleasing Thee. I will punctually fulfil the duties of my state of life, because such is Thy will. I will render to my neighbour, for love of Thee, all the bodily and spiritual services which are in my power. Accept the homage of my good will, encourage my endeavours by the compulsion of Thy grace, and sustain my weakness; that to the last day of my life I may labour to repair all the evil I have done, and that I may render Thee by well-doing as much glory, if possible, as I robbed Thee of by my sins. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

Weary of the entreaties of the Jews, Pilate, as if to make them understand that he would interfere no longer with what concerned JESUS, or be a party concerned in the crime of condemning One Who was innocent, called for water, and washing his hands before them all, said to the people, "I am innocent of the blood of this just Person; see ye to it." And the whole people answered, "His blood be on us and on our children."

1. This was assuredly a vain and miserable ceremony on the part of Pilate. His protestation, which was as ridiculous as unmeaning, not only took not away the weight of his iniquity, but showed that he felt all its importance, and hence but served to render

him the more guilty. That unhappy governor wished to quiet his own conscience, and so deceived himself. He laid to the charge of the wickedness of the Jews a crime which he should have imputed to his own weakness alone, and to the servile fear he had of displeasing the emperor. How many Christians are there not every day who call themselves innocent, and who are perhaps more guilty even than Pilate! These throw upon others the blame of the sins they have committed, and think after that to have nothing wherewith to reproach themselves. Is it not thus thou too often actest? When thou hast yielded to impatience, anger, murmurings, slander, and the many other sins thou so frequently committest, does it ever happen to thee frankly to own thou hast been wrong? If one believed thee, would it not always appear that others had given thee cause? Dost thou not throw the blame upon the world, its bad example, custom, passion, nay, almost sometimes upon God Himself? And with such excuses thou deemest thyself almost blameless, and livest as tranquilly as though thou wert innocent. Thinkest thou that God will form the same judgment of thy conduct? No. Though thy neighbour may have been the occasion of thy having offended God, in vain shalt thou seek to wash thy hands by throwing the blame off upon him. If he be guilty, thou wilt share with him the guilt. Excuse thyself, then, no more at the expense of others for the sins thou committest; but confess them humbly, ask forgiveness, and then the **Lord** will remit them to thee.

2. His blood be on us and on our children. This

terrible curse was called down by the whole Jewish nation; and for eighteen centuries its fulfilment has not ceased. It may be said the Divine vengeance is but the execution of the sentence which the Jews pronounced upon themselves. They associated in the punishment of their deicide their most distant generations. They have transmitted to their children as their sole heritage the maledictions of Heaven and earth which they incurred, and these unhappy victims to the sin of their ancestors are still plunged in spiritual blindness and the temporal ruin which the imprecation of their fathers brought down upon their heads. Learn from this how terrible a thing it is to draw down on oneself the curse of God. And yet, when in spite of the law of the LORD, in spite of His promises and threatenings, in spite of His grace, thou yieldest to sin, dost thou not expose thyself to the awful strokes of that curse? Dost thou not invoke the blood of JESUS CHRIST, which thou renderest unavailing, to fall upon thy head? That blood which thy Divine SAVIOUR shed for thee must inevitably work thy salvation or thy damnation. It will avail to thy salvation if thou labour to overcome thy passions, if thou avoid sin, and if thou live as a true Christian. It will, on the other hand, cause thy eternal damnation, if thou livest in subservience to thy desires, and refusest to bear the salutary yoke of the LORD. Choose, therefore.

*Colloquy.—*LORD JESUS, vouchsafe to cause Thy most precious blood to flow down on me to enlighten my mind, to touch my heart, to sustain my will, and to purify my conscience. Put away from me that curse

which I have so often deserved by my sins. But vouchsafe to shed on me the abundance of Thy grace, how unworthy soever I be thereof, that after it shall have brought forth much fruit in my soul, I may have the happiness of one day receiving from Thee the eternal recompense. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF PERSEVERANCE IN RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is to perseverance in the practice of Christian holiness that all the elect have owed their immortal crown; and it is likewise to perseverance that thou wilt owe thine. There are many Christians, says S. Jerome, who begin well, but, alas, few who persevere. But it is not the beginning which God searches into, but the end; that alone carries the prize. Thou hast forsaken thy sin, thou hast reason to hope He has forgiven thee; thou hast become once more the friend of God; but deem not thyself therefore safe. Thou wilt be saved only if thou have persevered to thy last breath. It suffices not that thou hast started in the race: thou must also reach the end. If, after resolutely setting thy hand to the work, thou look back, which God forbid, and return to thy evil life, God will shut thee out of Paradise. Consider, then, carefully the terrible consequences which unfaithfulness in God's service might entail.

1. Through want of perseverance thou wouldest entirely lose all the good thou hadst obtained during the past: the fruit of all thy labours and conflicts, and all it had cost thee to return to the Lord. The friend-

ship of GOD, sanctifying grace, thy holiness, thy deserts, the treasures thou shalt have laid up,—all would be dissipated and snatched from thy hands by sin: thou thyself wouldest be reduced to a state of destitution, indigence, and spiritual misery; and instead of all those precious blessings, thou wouldest possess only works of wrath.

2. Through want of perseverance thy state before GOD would become worse than before, sadder, more deplorable, more fatal than it was at first. The sin of relapse is much greater in the sight of GOD, because committed with more knowledge, malice, and ingratitude: after more signal favours, after more solemn promises, after resolutions cemented by the blood of JESUS CHRIST.

3. By failing in perseverance thou wouldest render thy return to GOD afterwards much more difficult. As those diseases into which we relapse are the most dangerous and most fatal, so the wounds of the soul which re-open are much deeper, more envenomed, and much more difficult to heal. On the other hand, thou wouldest have cause to fear lest GOD should withdraw His grace, at least His select and chosen graces, wherewith He had abundantly favoured thee. Such would be a terrible calamity, and thou must strive to avert it from thee by every possible means.

4. I add, even tremblingly, that by the want of perseverance thou wouldest render in some measure thy penitence and thy conversion questionable. I know that grace renders not a person impeccable, and that after a sincere conversion one may fall. I know likewise that a relapse is not a certain sign of false peni-

tence; and God forbid I should cast trouble and terror into souls. But it is always true to say that relapses afford some cause of fear for past penitence, especially when these relapses are sudden, frequent, and with reflection. But were there on this point only the least fear and suspicion, it should be enough to make thee dread above all things a falling back into sin, and hence bind thee to a holy and constant perseverance in God's service. Attach thyself, therefore, ever to Him, and be resolved to lose thy life a thousand times rather than forsake Him.

5. But as thou canst not of thyself do anything to merit this perseverance, and as it is, as thou hast been often told, a pure gift of God's mercy, put into practice the different counsels I will give thee. 1. Ask every day of thy life for perseverance, because the Lord commands thee to ask it of Him, and grants it only to a humble, persevering prayer. 2. Watch over thyself, over thy senses, over thy heart, over thy evil inclinations, over thy understandings, over all the actions of thy life, and over all the temptations of the devil. Thou hast all to fear from thyself and from the enemies of thy salvation. Without a continual watchfulness over thy soul, thou wouldest be in continual danger of losing the grace of God, and of ruining thyself. 3. Fly all occasions: this means of perseverance is absolutely and indispensably necessary to thee. Wert thou as wise as Solomon, as strong as Samson, if thou shun not occasions, thou wilt fall. Alas, the firmest pillars have been shaken! Tremble for thyself, therefore, weak and frail reed, and be assured that there are certain occasions wherein nothing

but flight can save and shield thee from danger.

4. Be frequent at the Holy Eucharist. There is the salutary spring whence thou mayest draw the strength which thou needest: and thou shalt obtain from GOD that final perseverance which alone can give thee a claim to an eternal crown.

MEDITATION XXVII.

JESUS IS CONDEMNED TO DEATH.

FIRST SUBJECT.

EVER more and more convinced of the innocence of JESUS, Pilate would not bear the weight of the crime of condemning Him to death, and sought more eagerly than ever the means to deliver Him. But the Jews began to cry out and say, "If thou let this Man go, thou art not Cæsar's friend: whoso maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar." Intimidated by these words, Pilate yet once more strove to plead in His favour, and said to them, "What! shall I, then, crucify your King?" and they answered, "We have no king but Cæsar." Then Pilate, afraid of further resistance, delivered Him up to them to be crucified.

1. Think of the sorrow of JESUS when He heard the cries of fury of those who were thus bent on His death, and when He saw that Pilate was giving Him up to their enraged will. Seek to realise His feelings in the state of total desertion in which He then was: forsaken by Pilate, who should have defended His in-

nocence, and have died rather than commit such an injustice ; forsaken by His disciples, who had solemnly promised to be faithful to Him till death ; forsaken by GOD His FATHER, Who could have withdrawn Him from the power of His enemies, but Who suffered them to practise on Him every imaginable cruelty.

2. Go in spirit, O sinner, to thy Divine SAVIOUR ; draw near with reverence to the spot where He stands, and there beholding Him alone, half clothed, covered with wounds, cast thyself at His feet, compassionate deeply His sorrow, and ask His forgiveness for thy sins which caused it.

3. Observe that in this awful event GOD abandoned His beloved SON to the power of evil men ; He left JESUS without consolation. It was to teach thee not to be amazed if GOD should sometimes leave thee in the power of Satan, to be tempted and afflicted in body and soul, and in all belonging to thee. But trust thou in Him ! GOD permits this storm only for thy greater good ; and He is able to save thee from shipwreck. Trust in Him, and abandon thyself humbly to His protection and His love. Thy honour, thy possessions, thy health, thy life, thy soul, and thy salvation, are in His hands, and nothing in the world can harm thee. If He hide His face for a while it is to try thy love, to rekindle thy faith, to promote thy salvation. Do thou trust, then, in His paternal protection whatever may befall thee.

4. Consider likewise the blindness of those unhappy Jews, who, having their true LORD and King before their eyes, yet cried out that they had no king but

Cæsar ; pity them, but remember likewise that thou hast imitated their conduct every time thou hast trampled under foot the law of GOD, to obey the devil, the flesh, and the world. Know that every time thou hast refused to acknowledge the glorious dominion of the LORD over thee, thou hast rendered thyself the slave of thy sins, of those shameful passions which for so many years have tyrannised over thy poor soul. Blush for thy past blindness, ask forgiveness, and return by true penitence to the LORD, to Him Who, to save thee, suffered so much weariness and pain.

Colloquy.—I return to Thee, O my SAVIOUR and my GOD, and I firmly resolve never more to forsake Thee by committing wilful sin. Thou art my LORD, to Whom I owe perfect obedience. I acknowledge Thee to be so, and I will henceforth submit to all Thy commandments. I am confounded at having for so many years served the devil, and the world, and my passions ; I blush at having been the sad slave of my sins. But now I will be Thine only ; I cast myself at Thy feet, and beseech Thee to take back into Thy service a fugitive slave who deeply repents of his past infidelities. I prefer by far to die, O my GOD, than to offend Thee as I have hitherto done ! I thank Thee for the goodness wherewith Thou hast sought me in my wanderings, me a poor strayed sheep ; I submit wholly to Thy laws, to thy will, to Thy good pleasure, because I acknowledge Thee to be my LORD and my King ; in a word, I will be Thine unreservedly in time and in eternity, for ever. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

Consider once more the conduct of Pilate with regard to the SAVIOUR. He ought to have had the courage to resist the Jews, and restore the innocent One to liberty; but when he heard those words, "Thou art not Cæsar's friend," he was afraid. He feared to lose the favour of the emperor, and contrary to all justice, he pronounced the sentence of death against the SON of GOD.

1. Weigh the horrible iniquity whereof that judge rendered himself guilty, who a little before confessed that he found in JESUS no cause of death, and who now condemns Him to die, in spite of his own conscience. Then he affirmed Him to be a righteous man; and now, though no contrary proof weighs against the accused, yet he condemns Him to be crucified! Just now he had acknowledged that the Jews had delivered CHRIST to him from envy and hatred only; and behold, he abandons Him to their cruel will. Doubtless thou loapest the unworthy conduct of Pilate, and rightly so; but turn thine indignation back upon thyself, for thou hast often done likewise. How often, indeed, hast thou clearly seen such and such an action to be wrong, offensive to the LORD, grievous to His holiness, and yet hast not abstained from committing it? How often hast thou trampled under foot the law of GOD for a paltry interest, through human respect, and through fear of displeasing a creature? How often, in order not to forfeit the esteem of man, hast thou preferred to lose the friendship of GOD by forsaking His service and thy religious exer-

cises? Weep, then, over thy past wanderings and long ingratitude; humbly ask forgiveness of the LORD, and purpose to act henceforth always with the view to please GOD only, and not through human motives. Rather lose the whole world, than His grace and friendship. If thou be really the friend and child of GOD, if thou render thyself worthy of His protection, by the holiness of thy life, the wicked may menace, persecute, rob thee of thy good things, thy reputation, and thy life itself, but they can never hurt thee for eternity.

2. Marvel at the humility of JESUS in the presence of that wicked judge; behold with what inconceivable patience He listens to him, and with what divine sweetness He hears the sentence pronounced against Himself! He protests not against the injustice of the sentence, but submits to it in silence, taking thy guilt upon Himself, and accepting lovingly the death which thy sins deserved. Give praise to that exceeding love of thy SAVIOUR, Who rejoiced to suffer, out of tenderness to thy soul and zeal for thy salvation, a penalty which was thy due; beseech Him to give thee a holy hatred for thy past sins, a sincere desire to repair them through penitence, and strength to commit them no more. Beseech Him to destroy in thee all that is displeasing in His eyes, and to render thee so pure and clean, that at the day of judgment thy soul may appear with confidence before Him, and receive not the sentence of death thou hast so often incurred, but the sentence of pardon and absolution, and a crown of eternal glory.

3. Observe that one of the reasons which led JESUS

to receive the unjust sentence of Pilate with so much submission was, that He saw therein not the hand of man which executed it, but the will of GOD which had decreed from all eternity that He should die upon a cross for the salvation of the human race. Thereby He would teach thee always to see in the afflicting events of life, more than appears to the eyes of the flesh ; He would teach thee that when men wound and persecute thee, they are for the most part but the instruments of the merciful chastisements of the LORD ; and that instead of being irritated against them, and revenging thyself for their blows, thou shouldst look to the source, and recognise the Hand of GOD, Who for thy greater good makes use of their malice, their passions and their sins, and submit thyself humbly to His good pleasure, whatever be the instrument He may use to try thee.

*Colloquy.—*LORD JESUS, I humbly acknowledge that, by reason of my innumerable sins, I deserve to be condemned to death in this life, and damned throughout eternity. But since Thou hast graciously willed to accept, for love of me, the cruel sentence of death on the cross, vouchsafe to remit the punishments which are justly due to me ; I supplicate Thee by that invincible patience wherewith Thou didst bear the unjust condemnation of Thy judge. Grant me grace always to live in estrangement from sin, in order that at the hour of judgment Thou mayest put me in possession of eternal glory. I repent of all my past iniquities ; I own that I was most foolish, since, knowing clearly the heinousness of sin, I yet ceased not from committing it ; I suffered myself to be

blinded by my passions ; I despised Thy holy law ; I acted against the teachings of right reason, and against the inspirations of Thy grace. O LORD, forgive me ! I loathe all the abominations whereof I have been so often guilty against Thee, and which caused Thy death. May I henceforth die rather than offend Thee any more. I ask Thee for this grace, O my JESUS ! Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

The sentence of death against JESUS had hardly gone forth when the rumour thereof spread through the whole city of Jerusalem. The people, curious to witness the spectacle, assembled from all quarters, yelling, and rushing like an overflowing stream towards the palace of Pilate. The tumult was at its height, and resembled the rushing of a stormy wind. But the enemies of the SAVIOUR lost no time. They seized Him, dragged Him with violence out of the judgment-hall, and kept Him in sight while they prepared the instrument of execution. They ill-treated Him, and among other things stripped Him of the old purple robe wherewith He was clothed, and put on Him again His own ordinary robe, in order that He might be publicly recognised. And as that robe was without seam, and narrow at the top, they were compelled to take off His crown of thorns to pass it over His Head, which crown they soon afterwards replaced with a fearful renewal of His pain and agony.

1. Who can restrain his tears at seeing JESUS, a Lamb full of meekness, abandoned to the fury of those bloodthirsty wolves ? Who can comprehend all He

had to suffer, when He was given up to their will, He Who had already borne so much ill-treatment from them, even whilst His judge was defending Him from their rage? There is but God alone Who knows all that His SON suffered for us, from the moment of His condemnation to that of His expiring on the Cross. Oh, mourn and weep, while thinking that thou too hast joined thine efforts to those of the Jews to afflict JESUS, and that each time thou hast committed a mortal sin thou hast renewed all the pain of His Passion! And tell me, hast thou never committed more than one?

2. Comprehend, if thou canst, how great was the confusion of JESUS, so pure and so chaste, in being again stripped of His garments, and thus exposed to the gaze of a whole people! What grief to Him to be thus given over to the mockeries and sarcasms of His enemies! And it was for thee, O poor sinner, that He endured all this shame, for thee who offendest Him continually, who doest so little to love and serve Him! Marvel at so sad a sight. He Who is the Judge of quick and dead, He Who will require from great and small, from shepherds and from kings, an exact and rigorous account of all their actions, He before Whom the pillars of Heaven shake with awe, He Who directs and governs this vast universe, behold Him become the sport of a nation thirsty for His blood, and burning with the desire to destroy Him by the most ignominious of deaths. It is fearful. Yes, my brother, it is fearful; but that which is yet more so, is the sight of a Christian who refuses to give up his evil habits, who persists in clinging to

sin, and who is willing, even joyfully, to lose his soul, for which JESUS thus vouchsafed to suffer. And that Christian, is it thyself?

3. Knowest thou wherefore our Divine SAVIOUR suffered them to strip Him of His purple robe, and to reclothe Him with the robe He had worn before He had been taken by His enemies? It was to teach thee to strip thyself of all that in thee is evil, of those habits of sin already so long formed and inveterate, of those passions which for so many years perhaps have tyrannised over and disgraced thee; or at least of that coldness for which thou doubtless mournest, but which thou hast not yet had the courage to shake off. It was likewise to teach thee to clothe thyself anew with the robe of innocence which thou receivedst at thy baptism, and to cover thyself with the mantle of holiness and of good works. Thank Him for so excellent a lesson; but at the same time, confessing with humility thy sad helplessness to avail thyself thereof, cast thyself at His feet, beseech Him to come to the aid of thy weakness, and to make thee a new creature, in order that men and angels may easily recognize by thy conduct that thou art His disciple, and worthy of the name of Christian.

Colloquy.—LORD JESUS, Thou didst clothe me at my baptism with honour and glory, by giving me the precious robe of Thy holy grace; but alas! I have by my sins become covered with shame and disgrace. Destroy in me sin and its accursed roots, that I may be worthy to put on again the white robe of innocence which I have lost. I have a sincere desire to live so holily in future, that all may behold in me a true

and faithful disciple of Thy gospel. I will bring forth fruits of penitence, and labour hard to be readmitted to Thy friendship. The thought of Thy terrible judgment appals me: therefore, I implore Thee to forgive all my sins before I must render Thee up my account. Come and help my misery, shed Thy grace into my soul, and grant that, after being so long the sport of my sins, I may be now and ever the happy slave of Thy love. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF DISTRUST OF OURSELVES.

1. We cannot too much distrust ourselves, nor too much trust in God. Humble distrust abates not our courage; true confidence puffs not up the heart, neither renders it rash or presumptuous. There is nothing which makes a man more courageous than his knowledge of his own weakness and of God's strength. Never separate trust in God from distrust of thyself, and thou wilt never fall either into despair or presumption. "The wise man feareth and departeth from evil; but the fool rageth and is confident." "The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life."¹

2. Distrust thine own reason; it is a foolish, heedless thing, which will bring thee into trouble if thou lean upon its guidance; it has little light; and the little it has is darkened by many passions, and by the artifices of self-love. Without the grace of God, who can go a step without losing his way? God refuses His grace to the proud, but gives it to

¹ Prov. xiv.

the humble. The wisest of men is he who thinks himself least wise, and trusts not to his own reason. Wouldst thou trust thyself to the conduct of a driver who is blind, or of a pilot who is drunk? "Lean not unto thine own understanding," says the wisest of men.¹ "There is no wisdom nor understanding, nor counsel against the LORD."²

3. Trust not to thine own heart, nor to its good resolutions; it is a deceitful and faithless one, which will break trust with thee. How often has it deceived thee! It is a labyrinth where one is lost, and cannot come out again. How often hast thou strayed in it! It is an abyss which has no depth: who can fathom it? It deceives itself, and thinks it desires that which it desires not, and seeks not that which it seeks. There is nothing more treacherous and false than self-love; and what governs our hearts but self-love? What is more changeable than thy will? What more weak and unstable? How often hast thou resolved to change thy life! and yet one sees no change. Trust not, therefore, to thy resolutions, "He who trusteth his own heart is a fool," says the HOLY SPIRIT.

4. Trust not to thy strength, for thou hast none. Thou canst not think a good thought, or form a wish, or fulfil a good action, without the grace of GOD. Who art thou to resist the devil, unless GOD aid thee? Who can of himself resist the least of his temptations? All our strength consists in the knowledge of our weakness, and in distrust of ourselves. "In quietness and in confidence shall be

¹ Prov. iii.

² Prov. xxi.

thy strength." Thou knowest the calamity which befel S. Peter, from having presumed on his own strength: beware lest the same thing befal thee. "A horse is prepared for the day of battle; but the victory is from the **LORD**." In vain dost thou strengthen thyself with good resolutions; if thou trust in thine own strength, thou wilt perish in the conflict. "Show, O **LORD**," said Judith, "that Thou forsakes not those that trust in Thee, but humblest those that trust in themselves."

5. Trust not to thy own merits; for thou art not sure of ever having done one good action: the good thou hast done is not equal to the evil thou hast done; and thy good works proceed more from **GOD** than from thyself. "As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me," says the **SAVIOUR** of the world.¹ Does the branch boast itself of the fruit it bears, or the hand of writing well? We must do good works; without them we cannot be saved: but we must not trust in them. "If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."² "He that trusteth in his riches shall fall; but the righteous shall flourish as a branch."³

6. Trust not in any creature; for all are full of weakness and unfaithfulness. How often hast thou not experienced this! **GOD** is jealous of His glory, and suffers us not to lean on the favour of princes, on the faith of friends, on our own prudence, on our wealth, or our merits. He cursed by the mouth of Jeremiah the man who put his confidence in men, and

¹ S. John xv.

² Gal. vi.

³ Prov. xi.

made an arm of flesh his support. “Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the **LORD**.¹ The fig-tree which **JESUS** cursed withered away immediately. And what fruit can a man bring forth who is cursed of **GOD**? Lean not, then, either upon thy wisdom, or thy virtues, or thy strength, or thy resolutions, or thy merits, or thy friends, or on any created thing.

7. On what, then? On **GOD** alone. Let Him be all thy strength, all thy support! and thou wilt gain the victory over all thine enemies. “They that trust in the **LORD** shall be even as the Mount Zion, which may not be removed, but standeth fast for ever. The hills stand about Jerusalem; even so standeth the **LORD** round about His people, from this time forth for evermore.”² O my **GOD**, Thou hast known me and tried me; Thou knowest my weakness and infirmities. Oh, if I knew myself, I should not be as presumptuous as I am! I should say, in the fervour of my devotion, with David, Nothing can shake me; my soul will never change. Thou hast withdrawn Thy Presence, and I am become more troubled than ever. O **LORD**, I will never more trust to myself, nor build upon my own reason or resolutions; but on Thee will I rely solely, and place all my trust in Thy grace, in Thy help and goodness, and in the merits of Thy Son, who will be my only hope, till my last breath.

¹ Jer. xvii.

² Ps. cxiv.

MEDITATION XXVIII.

JESUS BEARS HIS CROSS..

FIRST SUBJECT.

ALL being ready for the execution of JESUS, His executioners dragged to His feet the cross whereon He was to be nailed. He bore it painfully on his bleeding and wounded shoulders; and with a cord round His throat, surrounded by the chief priests, soldiers, and enemies of all kinds, He proceeded towards Calvary.

1. Marvel at the promptitude with which our Divine SAVIOUR took upon Him the instrument of His cruel death. Covered with wounds, weakened by the loss of almost all His Blood, more dead than alive, yet He refused not the cross. He pleaded not His state of complete exhaustion; but rejoiced to bear it for the glory of GOD His FATHER, and for the salvation of the world.

2. Is it thus thou bearest the light crosses which GOD is sometimes pleased to send thee? Is it thus thou gladly acceptest the trials, sorrows, and afflictions which His hand dispenses to thee? How promptly obeyest thou the commands and the will of those who have authority over thee? With how much ardour dost thou embrace the mortifications thou meetest with on thy path? Alas! thou art so weak, so cowardly, so indolent in the practice of virtue, so cold in the service of GOD, that the slightest sacrifice appears enormous, and all seems difficult, when it is in question to do thyselv the least violence. Thou

knowest not, then, that no one can be a disciple of JESUS CHRIST unless he bear His cross ? Art thou ignorant that the Cross is the seal of predestination ? Since JESUS walks before thee, do thou walk readily after Him. And since thou hast not had the courage to do it up to this day, know at least how to humble thyself for thy cowardice, and beseech the LORD to strengthen thee by His grace, to bear henceforth thy cross with JESUS, and for love of Him. If thou bear it courageously in this life, it will bear thee certainly to heaven.

3. Follow with tears of compassion the SAVIOUR on His progress towards the place of His execution ; behold how many sorrows on all sides encompass Him. His tormentors now push Him forward, now crush in upon Him, now drag Him roughly by the cord round His throat, and make Him fall down under the weight of His cross ; then they compel Him to rise by kicks and blows ; they replace His cross on His shoulders, which presses on Him so heavily that His flesh is laid bare to the bones : at each movement the points of His crown of thorns penetrate more deeply into His head : the numerous wounds of His body burn and consume Him ; the people insult, outrage, and strike Him, as though He were not human ; the sight of the two thieves His companions causes Him to blush with shame ; His countenance, once so lovely and filled with sweetness and majesty, is become livid, it is marred, covered with mud and spittle, it is not to be recognised ; His eyes are dim, bloodshot, and filled with tears. Tell me if, after this, thou hast any right to complain when thou feelest pain, or art laid

low by some sickness, or consumed by fever? Oh, at these times cast thine eyes upon JESUS bearing His cross, and at such a sight thou wilt find strength to suffer, not only without impatience and murmuring, but even with resignation and love.

Colloquy.—O my most blessed Redeemer, in what a sad condition do I behold Thee! Overwhelmed with the weight of a huge cross, Thou advancest painfully towards the place of Thy death, and art the victim of the ill-usage of Thine enemies. But Thou complainest of nothing, because it is for me Thou sufferest. How is it then, O my GOD, that I have not courage to receive with humility from Thy hand the cross and the tribulations which Thou sendest me as the punishment of my sins? How is it I murmur and complain of them? cause me, O LORD, to do so no more. I confess that every kind of punishment is justly due to me, and that a sinner such as I am has no right to refuse them. Give me, O JESUS, the courage to accept henceforth all the evils of life in a spirit of penitence for my past sins: I resolve to bear them patiently, and to offer them up to Thee as the penalty of the offences I have committed against Thee. I have deserved hell, and am most thankful that Thy mercy deigns to accept instead a few earthly sufferings, which quickly pass by, and which Thy grace will cause to open to me the gate of Heaven. Praise be to Thee, therefore, O LORD, for all the crosses Thou art pleased to send me; I accept them all with love; punish me in this life, so that Thou mayest spare me in eternity. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.¹

The Jews perceiving that JESUS was losing all His strength, and was faltering at every step, unable longer to bear His cross, began to fear He would not reach the summit of Calvary, and determined to give Him aid. So they stopped a certain passer-by who was coming from the fields, by name Simon of Cyrene, and compelled him to carry the cross in conjunction with JESUS. It was not from compassion they did so, but for fear that JESUS should die on the road, and thus deprive them of the atrocious pleasure of crucifying Him.

1. Pay attention to the lesson which JESUS gives thee, in permitting a stranger to help Him to bear His cross. He would teach us that as children of Adam, sinners, and Christians, we are under obligation to take with Simon one end of His cross, and to carry it after Him. To suffer is necessary for us; but if we have faith, it is likewise a great happiness. "Blessed," says the Gospel, "are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted;" the transitory tribulations of this life prepare for us in eternity an immense weight of glory. There is but one road to Heaven, it is the way of Calvary; all the saints have walked in it. S. Peter was crucified with his head downwards; S. Paul was killed with the sword; S. Stephen was stoned; S. Gervase cut in pieces; S. Laurence roasted on red-hot bars! more than twelve millions of martyrs have shed their blood to enter

¹ The Second Subject, being founded on a legend, is omitted.—ED.

Paradise. An infinite number of hermits, virgins, bishops, priests, and saints of every age, sex, and condition have attained to it through the merits of CHRIST, by tears of penitence, and the constant practice of every austerity. It is that all comprehend that there is no sanctification without the cross, that Paradise is closed irremediably against those who reject it. Thou, too, if thou wouldest have the privilege of being the disciple of JESUS CHRIST, must take up the cross like the saints ; thou must deny thyself like them, weep for thy sins, and like them do deeds of penitence ; thou must accept sickness, sufferings, and humiliations like them, and as perfectly. Remember that JESUS came into the world without sin, and yet left it not without suffering ; it is therefore most just that thou, who hast committed so many iniquities, shouldst live in tribulation and die on the cross. Woe to thee if it were otherwise !

2. Pray to the LORD graciously to give thee a sure token of His love, by dealing with thee as He dealt with His Son and His saints ; beseech Him to send thee some crosses, but at the same time to grant thee strength to bear them with resignation to the end of thy life.¹ Beseech Him earnestly to give thee grace to die in His love, in order to rise one day triumphant, and to reign for ever with Him in heaven.

Colloquy.—GOD of glory and blessedness, Thou art the sole LORD of Paradise, and Thou canst give it to whom Thou wilt, and on whatever conditions Thou wilt. Thou hast prepared heaven for those who suffer in this life, and who bear their sufferings without com-

¹ People must take care how they pray thus.—ED.

plaint, with patience and for love of Thee. I offer myself, therefore, to Thee, O LORD, and I am ready to embrace every cross it may please Thee to send me. I will under every circumstance, however afflictive, submit to Thy will, and thus obtain an eternal reward. Help me to understand this truth aright, that Thou openest the gate of Paradise to those only of Thy children who have lived in mortification, penitence, and tears. Grant me likewise a love of the cross, and strength to bear crosses with resignation, and to please Thee. I am ready to live humbled, penitent, and afflicted on earth, because I desire, O my GOD, to reign gloriously in heaven with Thee. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF PURITY OF INTENTION.

1. Purity of intention consists in doing all our actions with the sole aim of pleasing GOD. Thou belongest to GOD by so many claims, that it is of the strictest justice that there should be nothing in thee which is not His. Thou art His by virtue of creation, of redemption, and of the spiritual regeneration thou receivedst at baptism. Whatever lies in a soil, belongs to the owner of that soil: and as thou belongest to GOD by so many claims, all there is in thee ought to belong to Him. If thou rob Him of the least portion, thou art a thief. Every thought, word, and act of JESUS CHRIST, and His every suffering had for its end the greater glory of GOD His FATHER. It should be so likewise with all thy thoughts, desires, and actions.

2. If justice obliges thee to do all to GOD only, thine own interest should not the less compel thee to it. Good actions, when referred to GOD, become better through purity of intention, and those that are most indifferent become good. There is not an action, however mean it may appear, that is not ennobled by this intention; not one which will not be accepted by GOD, and win for thee an eternal degree of glory. What possessions and treasures, then, mayst thou not lay up! What a wonderful secret whereby to gather stores soon and easily! Thou well deservest thy poverty and misery, if, having the power to come out of it so easily and availably, thou neglect so good an opportunity. Purity of intention in the spiritual life can change all into gold, and give value to things which are valueless. It is a short and easy road, whereby in a short time to attain eminent sanctity.

3. Be assured that we never lose anything by doing all to GOD, but that, on the contrary, we gain more from Him than we had dared to hope. GOD is so bountiful to those who serve Him, that He rewards with eternal glory a glass of cold water given to a poor man for love of Him. When we have done much for men, they generally repay us with indifference, ingratitude, and sometimes even with contempt. It is not so with GOD, and He will pay thee back with usury a single sigh thou shalt have breathed for Him. Firmly resolve, therefore, to do nothing henceforth, but with the end to please Him.

4. What consolation is it not for thee to be able to become holy, by taking care to do all thy actions with reference to GOD's glory. What a still greater con-

solation at the hour of thy death, to have thus laid up much, without having done much ; to have obtained acceptance, without having performed any great actions ; to see that God will repay thy most indifferent and thy poorest actions, and not think the reward too great, in rewarding thee with an eternity of happiness ! Is it not a wonderful secret whereby to turn all to account, and to do much while doing nothing ? But, on the other hand, how great will not be thy despair at the hour of death, if thou have neglected this secret : when thou shalt find that from lack of that purity of intention, after labouring much thou hast gained nothing, and that having sown the wind through the self-love which was the motive of thine actions, thou reapest the whirlwind ; when thou shalt discover that thou hast, so to speak, lost as much eternity of glory as thou hast neglected to refer thine actions to God !

5. Resolve, then, to prevent so great woe, by ever referring henceforth all thine actions to God. Offer up to Him each morning all thou shalt speak, do, and suffer, in the course of the day. Renew, as far as possible, thy intention at the commencement of thy actions, at least the most important ones, such as prayer, communion, spiritual reading, and recollect thyself a little at the beginning of each action, after the example of the good man who never failed, at the beginning of each thing he did, to raise his eyes to heaven to recollect himself a few minutes. Being asked one day what he did at those moments, he replied, "I try to insure my stroke."

6. To labour to obtain a greater degree of glory in

heaven is a good intention ; but the more perfect one is to labour solely to please the LORD. Be well assured that the more thou strip thyself of self-interest, the more will GOD increase thy joy and happiness in Paradise. Thy spiritual affairs will never prosper so well as when thou shalt seek alone the greater glory of GOD.

7. Thou wilt be conscious of acting with purity of intention, if thou perform thy actions in secret as well as in public, quietly and unostentatiously, when without witnesses as well as when the eyes of others are upon thee, if thou act, as though there were but GOD and thyself in the world, if thou do small things as carefully as great ones, if thou desire no praise or reward from man, and if thou refer the whole glory to GOD. Is it thus thou actest ?

8. Beseech GOD to give thee a great purity of intention in all thy works, and suffer not that vanity or self-love intrude to rob thee of their fruit. Thus thou wilt lay up great treasures in Heaven.

MEDITATION XXIX.

JESUS ON CALVARY.

FIRST SUBJECT.

AT length, after much agony, JESUS, exhausted and half dead, reached the summit of Calvary. But His executioners granted Him not a moment's respite ; for seeing Him fall with exhaustion and weakness, and fearing He might die before He could be cruci-

fied, they gave Him to drink a little wine mingled with gall, to re-animate His strength, and at the same time to make Him feel, even internally, whatever had hitherto been wanting to complete His sufferings.

1. It was the custom of the Jews to give to criminals about to be crucified some wine mingled with myrrh, that their senses being stupified by the beverage, they might feel less the violence of the torture: but herein observe the brutality of the tormentors of the SAVIOUR: they availed themselves of this custom, not to diminish the acuteness of His sufferings, but only to torture Him the more; they mingled gall with the wine, that no part of His body, externally or internally, might be free from pain.

2. Recollect thyself, and examine in what manner thou performest thy actions, and thou wilt be obliged to confess to thy shame, that thou hast generally imitated this conduct of the Jews, by mingling sentiments of self-love and motives purely human, with all thy deeds and practices of religion, which ought to have no other end in view but the greater glory of GOD, and the salvation of thy soul. On the other hand, see how often thou hast, by some lamentable fall into mortal sin, done away with all the advantages of many years of arduous labour and strife in GOD's service; for just as a little gall suffices to spoil the best wine, so a small mortal sin corrupts and destroys all our past services, so that as long as we remain in that state of mortal sin, all our good deeds are in the sight of GOD as though they existed not.

3. Observe that JESUS tasted the beverage because it was bitter, but refused to drink it, because it was

strengthening, and would blunt His sense of suffering. Thereby this Divine SAVIOUR willed to expiate all thy sins of gluttony, and teach thee mortification in eating and drinking. Profit by the lesson He gave thee, and for the future eschew sensuality, which has ruined many souls ; put up uncomplainingly with what may be unpleasant to the taste sometimes in the food placed before thee ; learn to abstain at times from pleasant food, or even from what thou mayest think essential to thyself ; and never forget that sin having come into the world through the indulgence of the taste, penitence must begin with its mortification. He who knows not how to deny his palate, said S. Vincent de Paul, has not yet attained to the a b c of the spiritual life.

4. Do thou often think of the bitterness of the gall which was offered to JESUS on Calvary, and know that thou hast thyself made Him drink of a gall infinitely more bitter each time thou hast committed mortal sin. Abase thyself at His feet for the number and enormity of thy past sins, weep for them, humbly ask forgiveness again and again, and beseech Him to grant thee grace to die, rather than ever to fall back thereinto.

Colloquy.—O JESUS, Who wast given gall to drink, I beseech Thee to forgive all my past sins, and especially those of gluttony and intemperance. Give me the virtue of sobriety, that henceforth I may be contented with plain food suitable to my condition, and at the same time mortify all the ill-regulated desires of the palate. Food being a gift from Thy hand, I should use it but for right and lawful ends, and within the limits which Thy holy law prescribes. Help me

thus to act, and that I turn not what is necessary to nature into an occasion of sin. The Apostle tells us, that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we should do it into Thee. I will, then, follow his precept. Vouchsafe, when the occasions come, to recall it to my memory, that I may have the happiness of glorifying Thy Holy Name even in all the meanest and commonest actions of my life. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

When JESUS had tasted of the bitter drink they had prepared for Him, His executioners threw themselves furiously upon Him, and for the fourth time stripped Him of His garments ; and as by reason of the great abundance of blood which flowed from the SAVIOUR's many wounds, His clothes had become glued to His mangled flesh, they could only take them off from Him by tearing open His wounds.

1. Weigh well the inconceivable anguish which JESUS endured at that moment, the shame which He again suffered in this renewed exposure to a crowd which was greater than before. By that shame He willed to expiate the guilty deeds of impurity thou hast perhaps committed, and teach thee to practise the holy virtue of modesty, which requires that we treat our own bodies with respectful decency.

2. Compassionate the sorrow and shame of thy Redeemer. Reproach thyself for thine own way of acting, thy great love of ease, thou who wouldst be always well and warmly clothed, and who canst not endure that there be any neglect in thy apparel ; whereas thy JESUS was stripped of His clothing, and

trembling with cold, while awaiting the moment when He should be nailed to the cross and sacrificed for thy salvation. Know that if thou desirest to approach Him and embrace Him, thou canst never really do so, unless thou completely denude thyself of every human affection, of thy attachment to earthly things, and of all which sets a hindrance to thy perfection and salvation. Pray to the LORD to give thee grace to break the bonds which restrain thee from flying into His arms, and of uniting thyself to Him in a holy renunciation of all other things.

Colloquy.—O Almighty GOD, divest my soul from the earthly affections which may hinder my salvation! Thou didst complete the work of my salvation with shame and entire denudation, in bereavement of every earthly possession, in poverty and utter wretchedness. By the merits of this most wonderful sacrifice, give me grace to detach my heart from the dangerous love of gold and wealth. Kindle within me a holy thirst for eternal things, the treasures of heaven. Create in me ardent desires to possess them, that I may no longer employ myself in the care of increasing immoderately my temporal wealth, but be contented with the measure Thou givest me. I desire to be united to Thee, Who art my treasure and my all. Tear from my soul and cast away all which might set a hindrance to that union, so sweet and to be desired. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

The cross was laid on the ground, the altar was ready, and awaited but the Victim. At the first command of the executioners, JESUS sat down on the cross,

laid Himself down, stretched Himself thereon, and obedient to the FATHER unto death, offered to the executioners His hands and His feet to be pierced with nails. These they forced with the blows of a hammer first into His right hand, then into His left. Then they turned to His feet ; and as the pain of the first two wounds had contracted them, they drew them down with force to make them reach a piece of wood fastened on the lower part of the cross as a support, and they then pierced them with two enormous nails. The blood flowed from His hands and feet in streams.

1. Weigh deeply the horrible agony which our LORD then endured by the disjointing of His bones, the rupture of His nerves, the bursting of His veins, and the loss of blood which gushed from His sacred body pierced with nails in the most nervous and sensitive parts. Marvel at His silence, and behold how that Innocent Lamb of GOD, extended on the wood of the cross, petrified with pain, trembling with cold, lifts His eyes to Heaven, and His heart to His eternal FATHER, to Whom He offers Himself as the sacrifice for the sins of the world, and for thine own individually !

2. At sight of thy SAVIOUR yielding His limbs to the executioners for the salvation of thy soul, learn to give up thine to the service of the LORD. Use thy hands in works of charity and in relieving the poor ; thy feet in going to church, to visit prisoners and the sick ; thy knees in prayer ; thine eyes in weeping tears of compassion for the agonies of JESUS, and of contrition for thine own sins ; thy tongue in singing the praises of GOD and in thanking Him for

His mercies ; thy whole body in labour, in fatigue, in penitence, for love of Him who shed even to the last drop of His blood on a cross for thy salvation.

3. Learn also to crucify thyself, thy flesh, with its vices and lusts. Therefore mortify thyself on all occasions ; sway that rebellious flesh, above all, in those circumstances which have caused thee to offend God, that thou mayest advance more rapidly in the way of His commandments. Finally, learn to give up thyself wholly to God, since He, without any reservation, gave Himself up to death for thee, and that to the most agonising and shameful death.

Colloquy.—O my Jesus, I dedicate myself wholly to Thee, even as Thou didst sacrifice Thyself wholly for me on the tree of the cross ! Accept this humble oblation which I make to Thee of myself, and aid me with Thy almighty grace, that I may ever preserve myself Thy faithful servant, and dedicate my body and soul to the fulfilment of Thy will. I purpose to employ my hands in good works ; my feet in going to Thy temple, and in visiting Thy poor and sick ones ; my tongue in worshipping and praising Thee ; my eyes in holy reading, and my whole being in serving Thee. I know that my passions will do all their utmost to separate me from Thee ; but I implore Thy grace, and I will remain faithful to Thee to my last breath. Amen.

Resolutions.

A CHRISTIAN MUST BEAR HIS CROSS WITH JESUS CHRIST.

1. There is no salvation without the cross, no merit without patience, no victory without a battle, no virtue without opposition. Stagnant water becomes corrupt, meat without salt decays, iron laid by rusts, a horse which is not spurred stands still and refuses to proceed.

2. Thou art to be pitied if thou hast no cross. How canst thou be a martyr if there be no tyrant? How shouldst thou be a disciple of JESUS if thou be not persecuted? How wilt thou go to Heaven if thou be not afflicted? Men drive thee thither by their persecutions, GOD draws thee by sickness, the devil impels thee by his temptations, the world by its injustice, treachery, and calumny.

3. JESUS was hated by men, and thou wouldest be loved by them; JESUS was persecuted by men, and thou wouldest they should flatter thee; JESUS was despised by the world, and thou wouldest it should honour thee. Impossible is all this to a Christian. Thou must be either a martyr or a tyrant, the persecutor or the persecuted. Therefore make thy choice.

4. Thou sufferest, O Christian soul; thou art ill-treated and unjustly dealt with. Lift thine eyes to Heaven, where JESUS sits enthroned, where He is preparing a throne and a crown for thee. There thou shalt suffer no more. Wouldst thou attain without trouble that which cost JESUS so much? Oh, then

bear the cross which GOD has laid upon thy shoulder ! Thou wouldest never find another so fitted and suitable to thee as thine own. If thou fly from it, thou wilt find another heavier, and wilt lose instead of gain. The cross is planted every where ; it is found in palaces as in cloisters. Since GOD will have all men to be saved, HE has provided all with crosses, because without the cross none can be saved.

5. The cross bears excellent fruit. It detaches us from affection to creatures ; it wearies us with life, and makes us desire death ; it has made atonement for our sins ; it destroys our evil habits ; it assimilates us to JESUS CHRIST ! it gives us to drink of His cup, and brings us to repose upon His breast.

6. What a privilege for thee to be crucified with JESUS ! to be regarded and dealt with as one of His members ; to ascend a regal throne ; to bear His sceptre and His crown ; to participate in the work of His redemption ; to have fellowship in His sufferings ; to perpetuate His sacrifice ; to share His sorrows ; to bear with Him His cross ; to be a victim like Him, a martyr like Him, persecuted and slain like Him ! This is thy portion when thou acceptest with resignation the sorrows which GOD sends thee.

7. GOD chastises all whom He loves, and spares not the rod with His children. If HE correct thee not, thou art not loved by Him ; thou art not His child, thou art not one of His elect. Never is GOD so wroth with a sinner as when HE ceases to show him that HE is angry ; never is a righteous man so comforted as when he sees that GOD spares him not. If HE chastise him in this life, it is to spare him in

eternity. All the chastisements of this life are tokens of His mercy and of His justice, and He always visits with His grace those whom He visits with sorrow. As grace is a fruit of the cross, we must ascend the cross to gather it. Thou wilt never be deprived of grace whilst thou art not without a cross.

8. Take the cross from Love—she becomes carnal and human ; take the cross from Hope—she can no longer raise herself from the earth ; take the cross from Humility—she becomes mere vanity ; take the cross from Strength, and thou findest nought but weakness. There is no real virtue without the cross. Coin is not current unless it be stamped with the die of the prince ; it is, so to speak, its being impressed which gives it its value. If thou be not wounded, thy virtues will have no merit. The gold of thy good works will have no currency in Heaven unless stamped with the cross, which is the die of the Sovereign.

9. What consolation is it to rest on a cross with JESUS crucified ! Wherever thou shalt meet with a cross, thereon shalt thou behold JESUS nailed ; He is united to thee through suffering, and thou art united to Him by patience. In this union it is that the happiness of this life is found. He unites Himself to the saints in heaven by enjoyment, He unites Himself to men on earth by sorrow. GOD has restored the world in a different way from that wherein He created it. He created it by action, He restored it by suffering. It is the one universal cause of action and suffering which concurs with particular causes. As GOD, He governs all acting causes ; as Man, He suffers with all suffering men. Is it not to be doubly happy to be

united both in action and in suffering with GOD Incarnate?

10. Thou art a Christian only through the Cross ; and it may be said thou ceasest to be a Christian when thou abhorrest the Cross, or livest without a cross. To renounce suffering, is to renounce religion, since the Cross is its distinctive badge. Couldst thou share in the joy of JESUS, if thou hadst no portion in His sufferings ? Wouldst thou be associated with Him in His glory, if thou forsakest Him in His agony and shame ? Wilt thou reign with Him, if thou suffer not with Him ? We must fight, if we would be crowned. We must suffer to be saved. Inasmuch as man was lost through pleasure, he must needs be saved through pain. Is it not just ?

11. What are thy intentions, Christian soul ; and what wilt thou do ? Wilt thou go to heaven by another way than that which JESUS CHRIST followed ? Wouldst thou, if thou couldst ? Wherefore esteemest thou him unhappy and out of favour with GOD, who is bound to His cross ? Such a sentiment is excusable in a Jew, but not in a Christian. How did JESUS live in sorrow ; and wouldst thou live in pleasure ? The Innocent One was punished, and the guilty would be spared ! The SON was crowned with thorns, and the slave would wear a crown of gold and jewels ! The Righteous was nailed to a cross, and the sinner would sit on a throne ! What injustice and presumption !

12. There is no greater cross to a good man, than to be without crosses. The wicked suffer more in losing themselves for eternity, than the righteous in

being saved. The cross of a rebellious and impatient sinner is that of the impenitent thief who dies in despair; who blasphemers while hanging on the instrument of his punishment; who has no consolation or merit in his sufferings. The cross of a humble and resigned Christian is the cross of JESUS, full of Divine unction, which sustains him who bears it.

13. Honour thy cross, therefore, as a precious relic of JESUS; bear thy cross, remembering that it is the cross of JESUS; love thy cross as though it were the self-same whereon JESUS hung. Remember it is the seal of thy predestination, and the source of grace.

14. In a word, be assured that thou wilt never be secure of thy salvation, except when thou art suffering. Bless the LORD for all the crosses He sends; and be assured that if thou live and die bound to the cross of JESUS, heaven will be thine everlasting portion.

MEDITATION XXX.

JESUS ON THE CROSS.

FIRST SUBJECT.

WHEN the executioners had nailed the SON of GOD to the cross, they raised it up with cords; then drawing it to the pit, which they had previously dug in the rocky soil, they jerked it in roughly and violently; and there made it stand firm with wedges and stones. At this terrible shock, all the limbs of the Innocent Victim became dislocated; His wounds opened wider,

and the blood flowed more abundantly from His mangled feet and hands.

1. Raise thine eyes now to thy JESUS crucified, and see if there be any sorrow like unto His sorrow. He who in heaven is sitting on a throne of glory, who is there enjoying an unlimited felicity, who is surrounded by a countless multitude of angels eager to do Him homage, was uplifted on an infamous gibbet, His feet and hands pierced with nails, His head covered with thorns, His body mangled, His limbs dislocated. He suffered frightful pain ; He hung between two malefactors, as though the chief among them : He was mocked, insulted by the crowd ; He was exposed naked to the cold, and to the rude gaze of His enemies. His frame worn out by fatigue and agony, could find no relief ; if He would have sustained Himself, His weakness permitted it not ; if He drooped, the wounds in His hands became more torn ; if He raised His head towards His FATHER in heaven, the crown of thorns caused Him acute agony ; if He bent it downwards, His eyes fell on His holy Mother, standing near, and weeping bitterly ; if He turned it on either side, He beheld His tormentors making sport of His sufferings. Forget not that it was for love of thee that JESUS was reduced to so dreadful a condition ; and see how far thou hast hitherto responded to His love. Mourn over thy insensibility and the hardness of thy heart, since such a sight cannot even draw from thee a tear of compassion, or of sorrow for thy sins.

2. Form to thyself an image of JESUS on the cross : turn to Him a look of compassion ; think of Him as really nailed to it, as really suffering there. Behold

His head bent down to give thee the kiss of peace ; His gentle look attesting His love for thee ; His arms outspread to enfold thee ; His hands pierced to pour His gifts liberally upon thee ; His feet nailed to abide with thee ; His body stretched to give itself wholly to thee. Give thyself likewise wholly and unreservedly to Him : make many acts of thanks and love, and yield not to terror at the sight of thy past iniquities ; but trust in His goodness ; believe firmly that He will cast all thy faults into oblivion, how numerous soever they may be ; and purpose, with His grace, to do better for the future.

3. Learn from JESUS CHRIST to abide with perseverance on the cross of tribulation, and in the labours thou hast undertaken for the service of GOD. Beware of casting that cross from thee, or of descending from it before the time which the LORD has fixed in His wisdom. Abide thereupon, if need be, unto thy last breath, after the example of thy Divine Master. When we would remain faithful to the law of GOD, we are often a mark for the contempt, the mockery, and the sarcasms of men, as well as for the temptations of hell ; but do thou resolutely set them at nought, and let them not distract thee from thy duty. Therein imitate JESUS, against whom they cried, "If Thou be the SON of GOD, come down from the cross," who would not descend from thence, but abode thereon, until He had offered up His last sigh to GOD His FATHER, and was taken down only after death.

Colloquy.—O crucified SAVIOUR, I love Thee with my whole heart ; I acknowledge Thee to be the SON of GOD very GOD, and very man : worthy of our homage, and

of all the affections of our heart. I will love Thee so long as I breathe; and I beseech Thee to grant me grace to persevere in Thy love, and in Thy service, with a faithfulness which may never be inconsistent. Let nothing stop me, when it is in question to do good and to please Thee. Cause me to submit always to Thy holy will, whether in prosperity or in adversity; and let no tribulation or injustice from others make me separate from Thee. Finally, grant that in all things I may only seek to please Thee, and to grow firm in the fulfilment of Thy holy will. Give me strength to overcome all my temptations, and to despise the contempt of those who would blame my faithfulness in loving Thee. I am Thine, O my GOD; I will be Thine entirely, unreservedly, and till death. Grant me grace to remain so faithful to Thee, that I may have the happiness of loving and serving Thee, not only throughout this perishing life, but through all eternity. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

In the midst of all the anguish which JESUS endured on the cross, not a word of complaint, threat, or revenge came forth from His lips. On the contrary, His heart forgave all, and He gave us a beautiful example thereof. Before He thought of His mother, of His friends, or of Himself, He thought of the salvation of His enemies. He lifted to Heaven His languishing eyes filled with tears, and with a heart kindled with charity, besought His FATHER to forgive His murderers: "FATHER, forgive them, they know not what they do."

1. How great is the goodness and mercy of our

Divine SAVIOUR! At the height of His agonies He prayed for His most bitter enemies; when they insulted His misery, He excused their sin, He sought to lessen its heinousness, He took the office of their advocate. He prayed for the murderers whose hands were dyed with His blood, He prayed for the scribes and Pharisees who were making sport of Him, who were mocking at His torments, who had slandered His miracles and blasphemed His doctrine. He forgot His own agonies in solicitude for those who sought His death. He complained not of their ingratitude and cruelty; and instead of seeking vengeance and justice against them, He earnestly supplicated for their forgiveness and mercy.

2. What a lesson for thee, O Christian! Learn from thence never to become irritated by thy sorrows, and never to lose by murmuring the fruit of thy sufferings. Learn to pray for thine enemies; forget the wrongs they have done thee, and if thou canst not excuse their actions, at least excuse their intention. Remember that God will deal with thee as thou shalt have dealt with others, and that He will only forgive thee the many sins thou hast committed inasmuch as thou shalt have forgiven others heartily.

3. Examine thy conscience, and see whether hitherto thou hast imitated this goodness and mercy of thy Divine Master. Hast thou always forgiven those who have offended thee? Forgivest thou at present those who may be persecuting and crucifying thee? prayest thou for them? cherishest thou not against them any hatred or desire for revenge? dost thou not return them evil for evil? Oh, let it be so no more! Be

henceforth the true disciple of Him Who prayed for His murderers ; forgive with sincerity thy neighbour who offends thee ; leave to the LORD the care of avenging thee by turning their hearts ; and then reckon on the promise of GOD, for thou wilt certainly receive from Him forgiveness of all thy sins.

4. Comprehend how great ought to be thy confidence in the mercy of JESUS CHRIST. Perchance thou hast committed some enormous sins ; perchance thou hast long abused numberless privileges ; perchance thou art still oppressed by the hard tyranny of thy passions ; but lose not courage, and make a resolute effort to return to thy heavenly FATHER. Thou hast in Heaven an Almighty Advocate, Whose heart is full of compassion for thy miseries. He prayed even for those who crucified Him. He will likewise pray for thee. Cast thyself at His feet, beseech Him to mediate between thy sins and God's justice, and be assured He will win thy cause.

Colloquy.—Son of the living GOD ! most perfect pattern of a brother's love, I purpose to obey Thy commandment and to imitate Thy example, by doing good to my neighbour, what offences soever I may have received from him. I will, O GOD, forgive from my heart, and for love of Thee, all the wrongs and ill-treatment whereof I may be the object ; I will even pray with fervour for those who do me evil. I venerate the charity wherewith Thou didst ask of the FATHER forgiveness for those who crucified Thee, while their deep malice was calling for all the vengeance of the Almighty arm ; I likewise resolve to walk in Thy steps. I confess that I have numberless times offended

Thee by the sins I have committed against Thee, and that I greatly need Thy clemency and mercy to obtain the pardon thereof ; I hope, O my God, yes, I firmly hope that Thou wilt extend to me that infinite mercy of Thine, and forget my iniquities, even as I forget the unkindnesses I have received from my neighbour. Vouchsafe to forgive me all the sins of my past life, because I forgive unreservedly those who have offended me, as Thou hast commanded. Forgive them likewise, and grant to them, as to me, all the graces we need to enter into Heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

One of the two malefactors, seeing the great patience of JESUS CHRIST in the midst of His suffering, and marvelling likewise at the great charity which constrained Him while in such torments to pray for His murderers, became touched by grace and illuminated with light from above ; confessing therefore, His divinity, he commended himself to Him, and besought Him to remember him when he should come into His kingdom. JESUS, moved by his faith and trust, promised him Heaven, saying, “To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise.”

1. Admire the faith which the penitent thief showed in this case ; it was so living and penetrating, that perhaps no other faith so great had been found in Israel, as says S. Augustin.¹ Abraham believed, that GOD had spoken to him from heaven ; Moses believed,

¹ Verè non invenit tantam fidem in Israël, imo nec in universo mundo. (S. Aug. cap. ix. 1. l. De Animâ et ejus Orig. Vide S. Greg. lib. i. Mor. c. 25.)

but GOD had spoken to him from a burning miraculous bush! Isaiah believed, but He had spoken to him from a glorious throne, surrounded by a great multitude of blessed spirits. Now the faith of the penitent thief was yet more perfect, for he believed in JESUS CHRIST Who was naked on the cross, worn-out with pain, derided and blasphemed by the chief priests of the law, and about to breathe His last in a condition so little in accordance with the qualities of King and GOD.

2. Admire likewise the strength of his hope. He beheld a man in the agonies of death, and he hoped that He would remember him after His death. He confessed himself guilty of many crimes, and yet hoped to obtain the forgiveness of Him Whom he had just heard praying for His enemies. He had as yet in no wise experienced the mercy of his SAVIOUR, and yet he felt convinced that he should not be deceived or rejected if he cast himself into the arms of Him Whom he beheld forsaken by the whole world. What energy of hope: and how far art thou from having any like it? Ask the SAVIOUR for it through the merits of His cross.

3. Observe the goodness and mercy of JESUS CHRIST towards the penitent thief. That meek penitent asked but simple remembrance when He should come into His kingdom: and, behold, He promised him His kingdom.¹ He looked upon him with eyes of love, He raised him from his degradation, He for-

¹ Ille rogabat ut ne memoriam laberet cùm venerit in regnum suum; sed iste obtulit regnum suum. (S. Ambr. Serm. viii. in Psal. cxviii.)

gave him all his sins, and promised him Paradise. Be, then, ever full of confidence in JESUS; for canst thou think He would refuse thee Heaven if thou strive to serve and love Him, when He thus freely gave it to one who had spent his life in offending Him? Oh, what a good master is JESUS, and how much blessedness is there in serving Him! Behold, He forgets His own torments to listen to the voice of a sinner. He is silent when maledictions are poured forth upon Him; but as soon as He hears the cry of a poor sufferer, He restrains not Himself from responding to it and graciously fulfilling his prayer. It will be thus with thee each time thou turn thyself to Him with confidence and love.

4. Lastly, learn how important it is to salvation, to avail ourselves of the opportunity which GOD presents to us, and to make a holy use of grace. There is nothing so efficacious as that Divine grace; behold what it produced in the penitent thief! He was on the verge of the eternal gulf; one step farther, and he would have gone down into it for ever: but grace touched him, and lo! he was called to the glory of Paradise. It was because he faithfully surrendered himself at once to his inspiration; he hesitated not for a moment to proclaim the Divinity of JESUS CHRIST, and to confess his sins. Had he delayed a little longer, had he trifled with grace, perchance it would have been withdrawn from him, and he had been lost. Be humbled, that thou correctest thyself so little of thy bad habits, and hast turned a deaf ear for so many years to the interior voice of GOD, calling thee to His service. Abuse no longer the mercy of

the **LORD**, and remember that while one of the two thieves was saved, the other was lost. **GOD** fails no one, but we must respond to His grace. It is not enough to be at the side of **JESUS CHRIST**, we must believe and hope in Him. Though the impenitent thief was crucified but a few steps off from **JESUS**, yet his soul was not the less lost for ever. It is not enough to go frequently to church, to be there for hours, to perform a thousand devotional exercises, how good soever in themselves ; but we must, before all else, obey quickly and faithfully the inspirations of **God**. We must love Him with our whole heart, and abstain from evil. Beseech the **LORD** to give thee grace never to neglect His inspirations, but always to respond to them eagerly.

Colloquy.—O Almighty Sanctifier of souls, shed into my soul the plenitude of Thy grace, because it has powerful influence over the heart of man ! Grant me a free and sincere conversion, like that which Thou grantedst to the penitent thief. Give me clear light, to reveal to me Thine infinite greatness, and Thy stupendous blessings, that I may love Thee with all my strength, and love Thee alone, Who art my supreme good. Become Thou the possessor of my heart, by the sweet constraint of Thy inspirations, and fill it with ardent desires for Thy glory, with a salutary fear of Thy justice, and a deep hatred of all which displeases Thee. I commend my liberty entirely into Thy Hands ; I dedicate it to Thee, and beseech Thee to establish it in Thy service, so that I may never more offend Thee. I beseech Thee to grant me this precious grace, by the merits of the

blood Thou didst shed for me upon the cross, and by the infinite agony which Thou didst suffer in the cause of Thy passion. Amen.

Resolutions.

OF THE RECOLLECTION NECESSARY FOR THE HOLY PERFORMANCE OF OUR ACTIONS.

1. Endeavour every day of thy life to live in recollection, because it is this which will give thee possession of God's kingdom here, and the government of all the powers of thy soul. That which constitutes the kingdom of God in Heaven is the presence of God, and the happiness which the saints enjoy in possessing Him; that which constitutes the kingdom of God on earth is the presence of God in us, and the happiness we have in contemplating Him, and in some measure in possessing Him.

2. Recollection comprises two things, viz. a continual or frequent attention to God, and a continual or frequent attention to ourselves. 1. Continual attention to God consists in ever looking up to God, and making His glory the end of all our actions, in ever referring ourselves to God, and in making His light the rule of our conduct; in leaning on none but God, and in making His help and grace the sole foundation of our confidence. 2. Attention to ourselves consists in observing our own ways, in guarding the numberless impulses of nature and sense which escape us, in watching over the many human motives which mingle with our best actions, and the

multitude of imperceptible but incessant windings of our self-love ; in moderating our natural activity, and in restraining the sallies of our wit.

3. Nothing is more necessary than recollection for advancing in holiness. The more we go forth outwardly, the more need we have to withdraw, at least from time to time, into ourselves ; otherwise, even the best occupations distract us much.

4. To avoid this evil, follow the counsels I here give thee. Before thou beginnest any action, withdraw into thyself, calm thy mind, direct thy intention, do nothing from impulse, avoid eagerness, disquietude and precipitation. After the action, pause a moment before passing on to another ; reflect whence thou comest and whither thou goest, and examine whether thy action have been rightly done, or there be aught amiss in it. Thank GOD for what thou hast done well, and ask Him to forgive what thou hast done evil. Offer to Him thy next action. Renew thy intention, ask His blessing, and commit thyself into His Hands, to receive the guidance of His SPIRIT.

5. This reflecting from hour to hour on what we have done and said produces many effects ; it causes a soul to see her sins and imperfections, it makes her know her own frailty and wickedness. It gives her a contempt for herself, establishes her in humility by the knowledge of her faults, and discovers to her the abyss of her misery. Moreover, it renders her careful and vigilant, draws down a fresh supply of grace upon her, keeps up her fervour and contrition, corrects what is evil as soon as committed, and prevents it from taking root in the heart.

6. Ask, then, frequently from GOD the spirit of recollection, and make it easy to thyself by continual exercise. All the saints faithfully practised it; thou canst and shouldst practise it likewise.

MEDITATION XXXI.

JESUS EXPIRES.

FIRST SUBJECT.

OUR Divine SAVIOUR had now been on the cross two long hours. Bending His dying head downwards, He perceived His Mother standing at the foot of the cross, bathed in tears, and absorbed in the deepest grief. He then fixed upon her His eyes, already dim, and not willing, as her loving Son, to leave her alone and desolate on earth, He said to her with a gentle and tender voice, directing her to S. John, His beloved disciple, who was present, "Woman, behold thy son!" that is to say, "He will be to thee what I have been; he will minister to thee, and honour thee to thy last breath." Then addressing Himself to S. John, "Behold thy mother!"

1. Observe that new token of the tenderness and love of JESUS towards His Mother. He had but a few more moments to live; He was exhausted with torture and anguish, but He forgot not the office of a dutiful Son towards her who had born Him after the flesh. After praying for His murderers, and promising Paradise to the penitent thief, it was then indeed

just that He should comfort His sad Mother, and bring some relief to the anguish of her heart, anguish so bitter that it would certainly have caused her death, if God by a miracle had not given her strength to endure it. Learn from this conduct of JESUS towards His Mother, how much reverence thou owest to the authors of thy days. Learn to impose upon thyself every kind of sacrifice to prove thy tenderness and gratitude towards them, and to anticipate all their wants. Above all, sooth their grey hairs, treat them always with the greatest consideration, avoid grieving them in any thing, and be ever to them a dutiful, affectionate, and grateful son.

2. "Woman, behold thy son." Strive to form to thyself an idea of the indescribable anguish which the blessed Mother of our LORD felt on hearing these words. She comprehended at once that her beloved Son drew near to the close of His life, that the hour of His death was at hand, and that He was addressing to her His parting farewell. Then was fulfilled to her the prediction of the aged Simeon; for then was her soul pierced with the sword of anguish, and wounded with most poignant desolation.

3. Nevertheless GOD, Who beheld in JESUS the Man laden with all the iniquities of the human race, forsook Him, and left Him without support or consolation to these fearful sufferings of soul and body. This desertion was so agonising to the SAVIOUR, that He complained thereof to the LORD, saying with a mournful cry, "My GOD, My GOD, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" This complaint comprises for us many important lessons. Our good Master willed

thereby to teach thee how great were the sufferings which He accepted and endured for thee; likewise He willed to teach thee that, in thy woes and desolations, a tender and reverential complaint breathed forth to Him is not forbidden thee, provided it be united to a perfect acquiescence and entire submission, to bear all the trials under which GOD places thee. Lastly, He willed by His complaint, breathed forth to obtain for thee grace to imitate the example He gave thee, that thou mayest complain only in like manner.

Colloquy.—My LORD and my GOD, Thou Who didst deign to die for love of me upon the cross, I thank Thee for Thy glorious Incarnation. Grant that I may imitate Thee in loving reverence and filial tenderness, and in unlimited trust in GOD. I desire, likewise, to reverence Thy Church, in her daily prayers, in the sanctification of her festivals, and in the observance of her commandments. I will also strive to make her known as the channel of Thy grace and of Thy worship. I will do it for Thy glory, and because I know it to be Thy will. Amen.

SECOND SUBJECT.

The sufferings of our Divine and crucified LORD were ever increasing. Feeling Himself consumed internally by a burning heat, His palate and throat painfully dried up by the great loss of blood He had sustained, by excessive constraint of posture, and by the dreadful torture He had endured, He said, with a touching voice, “I thirst.” Now there was there a vessel full of vinegar. A soldier took a sponge, dipped

it in this vinegar, and raised it to the lips of JESUS. The SAVIOUR tasted it, and said, "It is finished."

1. Behold how profound is the perversity of these ruffians. Instead of giving some relief to JESUS, reduced by suffering to the most heart-rending condition, instead of giving Him a little water to refresh His parched tongue, they offer Him vinegar! Thy spirit is indignant, and certainly most justly so: but turn thine indignation upon thyself, for thou hast often acted towards JESUS in a manner as horrible and guilty. How often has He said to thy soul that He thirsts for thy conversion and thy love! how often has He besought thee to satisfy this thirst by returning to Him, and by not rendering unavailing to thyself all the sufferings of His Passion! And thou hast scorned His voice. Thou hast not willed to give up thy iniquities: thou hast persisted in pursuing thy inclinations: and every time that JESUS has said to thee, "I thirst, My son, I thirst for thy love," thou hast given Him the vinegar of thy ingratitude. Weep then, O poor sinner, weep! Make haste to change thy life and to be penitent. At this price thou wilt console thy Divine SAVIOUR. Thou wilt satisfy His thirst, and wilt give to thyself tranquillity, happiness, and peace.

2. Compassionate the torments which thy Divine Master then endured. He, the Creator of Heaven and earth, to Whom all things belonged, was reduced to such a state of misery and want, that He had not even at the moment of death, a drop of water to appease His thirst. Be confounded at the many unmortified deeds thou hast committed since thou hast

been on earth, and thy many sins of gluttony. S. Bernard says, "Assuredly there are no meats so insipid that will not become palatable to a Christian, if he remember the gall and the vinegar which were given to JESUS."

3. Consider that, besides the bodily thirst where-with JESUS was tormented, He endured a thirst more painful still. It was a thirst to return into the bosom of the Eternal FATHER, and likewise a thirst for the salvation of all men, and of thine own individually. And thou, what are the things for which thou thirstest? Thou thirstest for the greatness and the pleasures of this world, for repose, for riches, for the frail and perishing enjoyments of earth. Where is thy burning thirst for the love of GOD! for sufferings, mortifications, and the humiliation which has been the portion of all the saints? Where is thy ardent thirst to work out thy salvation, and to take the means to make it sure? Hast thou ever once had a firm determination to detach thyself in sincerity from all earthly things, that thou mayest henceforth sigh for nothing but the possession of Paradise? Thou blushest to think of what thou art, and assuredly thou dost well. Resolve, then, for the future, to excite in thyself a thirst for the blessings of eternity, and ask JESUS CHRIST for it in humility.

4. "It is finished!" Wilt thou be able to say, to all intents and purposes, like our LORD, at the moment of death, "It is finished: I have fought the good fight as best I could; I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: I have adhered to the Church, and I die in her communion; I have followed the law

of GOD, I have done all He has commanded me, I have fulfilled the duties He allotted to me; I have loved Him above all things, and my neighbour as myself: I have endured the trials He inflicted on me, and have received from His hand adversity and prosperity with thanksgiving and resignation? Though I have offended Him, I have sought His forgiveness, and I have forgiven those who offended me, that He might forgive me. Having defiled myself with sin, I have betaken myself for cleansing to the blood of my SAVIOUR and to penitence; whatever debts I have to pay, my SAVIOUR has paid them for me; I unite my sufferings to His, my sacrifice to His; my trust is in Him only. I have received the last pledge of His love, and the last medicine for my sins; I have now but to die, and I die willingly with Him!" Oh, what shouldst thou not do to place thyself in such a condition, as to think and speak thus at the hour of death! Oh, happy death, which terminates such a life, and closes it with these sentiments! May it one day be thine!

Colloquy.—O GOD, immutable in Thy perfections and in Thy will, have compassion on the instability of my mind, and give me a constancy in virtue which nothing can shake. Suffer me not to forsake any more, as I have so often done, the holy exercise of prayer, the frequenting of the Sacraments, and my other devotional exercises. Put into my heart a great fear of Thy awful justice, that it may avail me as a powerful barrier against sin. Establish my soul unchangeably in an ardent love for Thine infinite goodness, that I may have no other thought than to obey

and please Thee in all things. I beseech Thee to grant me, in the name of the merits of Thy holy Passion, final perseverance in Thy love; and as nothing could deter Thee for a moment from Thy steadfast resolution to obey GOD Thy FATHER, even to the death of the cross, grant that nothing on earth may estrange me from faithfulness to Thy service. All I ask of Thee, O my God, is, that I may have the happiness of loving Thee unchangeably all the days of this mortal life, in order that I may love Thee one day throughout eternity in heaven. Amen.

THIRD SUBJECT.

JESUS having finished the work of our redemption, turned His soul towards GOD in Heaven, and said to Him, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit;" and then bowing His head, He yielded up the Ghost.

1. Weigh with devotion and tears these last words which proceeded from the mouth of JESUS CHRIST. He commended to His FATHER, not His riches, for He had none,—not His honours, for He had ever rejected them,—not His body, for He had just sacrificed it,—but His Spirit, to teach us that we should value nothing on earth but our soul.

2. See whether thou so livest as to be able to say with confidence at the last hour, "FATHER, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Examine whom thou hast served hitherto, GOD or the world, with its pleasures, honours, and riches; and know, that if thou hast served others than GOD, thou canst not reason-

ably hope for thy reward from Him, or commend thy soul to Him with confidence.

3. Observe the great difference which there is between the death of those who have been faithful to God in their lives, and the death of those unhappy ones who cling to the world, the flesh, and the devil. The former die in peace and consolation, which are a foretaste to them of the happiness of Heaven ; the latter die in grief and anguish, because they perceive that the world is failing them, that their sensual enjoyments are ended, and that hell is yawning to devour them.

4. Lastly ; look towards JESUS, whose life is just spent. See, He is in His last agony : His face changes ; His eyes close ; His head droops ; He dies ! Cast thyself in spirit at the foot of His cross. Shed tears of grief and sorrow. Beseech Him to give thee grace to die wholly to the world, and all created things, in order to live solely to Him. Ask of Him likewise to die one day in His arms, and meanwhile to labour continually for thy salvation, in order to go and see Him, to praise and love Him, in Heaven to endless ages.

Colloquy.—O Eternal God, I command to Thee my poor soul during this life and to the hour of my death ! Protect her against her enemies, preserve her from the leprosy of sin, and strengthen her in Thy service. I beseech Thee for this by the merits of Thy death, and by the ardent desire which I have to behold Thee, to praise Thee and to love Thee in eternity. Vouchsafe to come Thyself and comfort me in my last sickness, and grant me then, above all things,

a true and sincere contrition for all my past sins. Let Thy presence be to me in the hour of death, a foretaste of my eternal happiness. Let me die to the world and to sin, and live but for Thee. O my gracious Redeemer, O my Possession, my Life, my All ! Alas, I have too greatly offended Thee ever since I was born : extinguish in me the fire of concupiscence, that it may no longer reign in my heart. Let Thy pure love reign alone therein, and give me strength to do all, and suffer all, to please Thee. Let this love consume me all the days of my life, and kindle in me fresh ardour at the hour of death. This is the grace I ask of Thee, O JESUS ! Reject not my prayer, but favourably hear and answer it. Into Thy hands I commend my spirit, during my life, at the hour of death, and for all eternity ! Amen.

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